

Chapter 1

Harry watched the back of the elderly wizard in disbelief as he walked out the infirmary while sealing the door, Harry's whole world had just come crashing down around him as the man he trusted above all others had let him down. The words still reverberated in his brain, "I believe you Harry but there's nothing I can do, the minister is going to have Sirius kissed tonight." One minute Harry had a family, a godfather who wanted Harry to live with him, then all that was going to be taken away because a small man wanted to look big in the press. The Minister wanted his headline, and an innocent man was going to have his soul sucked from his body while Albus Bloody Dumbledore, Head of the Wizengamot, claimed his hands were tied.

He felt a hand on his arm and turned to look into the brown eyes of his best friend and Harry did something he'd never done before, he threw his arms around Hermione and pulled her into a hug, burying his face in her bushy hair.

Hermione was shocked that her best friend had initiated a hug, he was normally very uncomfortable with any form of contact, yet here he was clinging to her as if his life depended on it. She had her arms wrapped round Harry when he whispered her name; "Hermione?" she started to pull back but he held her even tighter.

"No, please stay like this. If I looked into your eyes I would lose the last piece of courage I have and there's something I really need to tell you. Before I passed out I saw who cast the patronus that saved us, it was me!"

Hermione just held him as something told her there was more to come.

"I wasn't alone though, Buckbeak was in the background, but I think the reason I was able to cast a corporal patronus was that I had a whole new set of happy memories. I was kissing my best friend!"

Hermione's mind was in turmoil, no wonder I couldn't get him interested in me if he was kissing Ron, that was an image she didn't need in her head, as she felt Harry pull back a short distance to look

at her face. He still held her in his arms as he looked into her eyes and asked, "Do you think I'm crazy? Em...Do you even think of me like that?"

It was like an explosion as realisation hit the young witch, how could she, Hermione Jean Granger, be so stupid. Her thoughts were interrupted by the sound of someone screaming in the castle. "Harry, do you trust me?" she asked.

"More than anyone in the world" he said, while nervously watching as she started to loosen buttons on her top. She withdrew a long golden chain that had an egg timer charm on it, looping the chain over Harry's head as well she said, "hold on tight" as she turned the charm three times backward. It wasn't strictly necessary for Harry to hold on tight but she wasn't going to tell him that, it felt to good.

Harry watched his surroundings blur as everything went out of focus except the beautiful witch currently wrapped in his arms. Ever since Harry had seen the vision of them kissing it just felt so right that he could probably cast a patronas just with the thought of kissing Hermione.

As everything came back into focus, Hermione removed the chain from round his neck and tucked it back inside her top. She gave him the 'you need to listen to me' look before starting to speak.

"Harry I've been using a time turner to go back in time so I could take all my classes. I've just sent us back three hours and, with a bit of luck, we could save Sirius and Buckbeak."

Harry, whose arms were still around Hermione, lifted her feet of the ground and spun the giggling girl round twice while repeatedly chanting 'yes!'

"Hermione you are the best and never let anyone tell you different."

"Harry, we need to be quiet, we can't be seen or heard." Taking him by the hand she led him through the school heading towards Hagrid's hut.

It wasn't till Harry saw the three of them heading out of school that the danger of their situation began to sink in.

When they made it to the trees beside Hagrid's pumpkin patch, Hermione sat him down and explained the dangers of time travel. Harry was only half listening as he gazed at his beautiful friend, he didn't need to listen as his new motto was, 'do whatever Hermione tells me,' she'd never let him down in the three years he'd known her and not many people could match up to that in Harry's life.

As the scene played out in front of them Harry raced out to rescue Buckbeak, not forgetting to bow to the Hippogriff, and untied the condemned animal. Harry pulled on the rope but there was no movement from the large creature until a dead ferret came flying over his left shoulder straight into its beak. Harry turned round to see Hermione had raided Hagrid's store and held handfuls of the dead creatures, which definitely got Buckbeak's attention. Between flying ferrets and Harry pulling on the rope they managed to get the Hippogriff under cover before the execution party left the hut.

Macnair threw a hissy fit, attacking Hagrid's pumpkins with his executioners axe. The only reason he didn't get slapped was the gentle giant was currently doing his version of break dancing, meaning anyone within a ten foot radius would have suffered a broken bone from his flailing arms and legs. Compared to his dance skills Hagrid was a master baker and anyone surviving his legendary rock cakes would dispute that vehemently.

Fudge looked as if he might burst out crying at any moment, his bottom lip trembling like a petulant child while Dumbledore just appeared perplexed, a new look for the headmaster and one that both students thought suited him.

They waited as the three stooges, Cornelius, Walden and Albus headed back to the castle while Hagrid was almost skipping in the direction of Hogsmead; the Three Broomsticks was in for a giant celebration tonight.

Harry and Hermione manoeuvred the stubborn hippogriff into position and waited until they were required. Hermione explained for the third

time why they couldn't interfere with what they knew had already happened though she had to wrap her arms round Harry when Peter escaped again.

As they waited both suddenly looked as if they had been petrified before falling into each other's arms. "Where are we? When are we Hermione?" asked Harry.

"Oh Harry, your scar is fainter and my teeth are enormous again!" she looked around and saw Buckbeak, "This is the night Sirius was kissed, Harry we may be able to save him."

Harry was confused, "but how can we be here and yet over there at the same time?"

Hermione felt as if she'd been hit by the nightbus, "Shite Harry, I'm so sorry! I had a timeturner and never thought to use it. How could I have been so stupid?"

"Hermione, no one calls my girlfriend stupid, even you. So tell me what this means?"

"It probably means something jogged my mind to use the timeturner, I'm wondering if you saw us?" mused Hermione.

"But how the hell could that happen?" bemoaned Harry, the permutations making his head hurt.

"Well considering we travelled back in time and there's a timeturner involved to, I would say pretty much anything is possible. I think it may be like a 'chicken and egg' paradox but since I'm not yet SEVENTEEN, give me another hundred years and I might be able to work it out."

"As long as you spend them with me," said Harry while wrapping his arms round her, "I thought I lost you once and that was enough for me, I'm never letting you go."

"I'm very happy to hear that Potter because you're stuck with me now" said Hermione

“Wouldn’t have it any other way love,” as he kissed the wonderful witch who had been his girlfriend for nearly a year now.

Both felt the temperature drop drastically as the dementors made their presence felt, Harry drew his wand and produced the strongest patronus of his life. The dementors fled and Hermione helped Harry get Buckbeak back under cover.

“Now all we have to do is rescue Sirius from the castle,” stated Harry confidently.

“Oh Harry, I’ve just thought of a serious problem. We have no idea where in the castle he’s being held.”

The now thirteen and fourteen year olds looked at one another and had the exact same thought, shit!

A/N Please review

Chapter 2

The two teens both came to the same conclusion simultaneously, they needed the Marauders Map. "Can you remember where it is?" asked Hermione.

"I think it's in Remus's office but how in Merlin's name are we going to get it in time?" answered Harry.

"Well we can't go strolling about the school with a condemned hippogriff so I'm open to ideas," replied Hermione.

"Dobby!" exclaimed Harry and an instant later the little house elf appeared.

"What can Dobby do to help the great Harry Potter?" he asked while bouncing up and down with excitement.

"Dobby could you fetch us the map that's on Professor Lupin's desk? We think he left it there..." Dobby was gone before Harry could even finish, arriving back clutching the map within seconds.

"Brilliant Dobby," said Harry to the beaming elf, giving the map to Hermione he then spoke to his little friend, "Dobby, would you like to work for me – and Hermione?"

He just wrapped his arms around Harry's legs, nodding his head while crying tears of joy.

"I think you need to claim your inheritance first Harry," said his girlfriend without lifting her head from the map she was studying.

"Oh right! I, Harry James Potter, being the last of the Noble and Ancient House of Potter claim my rightful inheritance and head of my house." Declared Harry as a light seemed to shine through him, verifying his claim, before the Potter family ring appeared on his finger.

"Dobby would be honoured and proud to work for Lord Potter and his lady" said the elf.

"It's just Harry Dobby, Harry and Hermione. Now I need to know if you can get us through a locked door in the castle? We need to get back into the infirmary before anyone notices we left."

"That would be no problem Mas... Harry."

"Good, now I need you to go to Gringotts for me and access my family vaults, we need the Potter betrothal rings that are in a green velvet box. When I claimed my inheritance the goblins would automatically know my change in status, please inform them I wish this to remain confidential. Should the details leak out I will be moving the Potter accounts to another bank, and informing all their customers of their breach of confidentiality." Dobby stood just that little bit straighter with the importance of the task his master was entrusting him with; he left immediately for the bank.

Hermione looked up from her studying, "found him but he's being held on the fifth floor, how are we going to get him out?"

Harry went over and put his arm round his soon-to-be-betrothed best friend, "in case you hadn't noticed, our friend over here has quite the pair of wings on him."

Hermione lost all colour from her features as her Acrophobia kicked in with a vengeance, "Harry, I think I'll meet you outside the infirmary."

Harry held her in his arms, "you'll be with me, what could possibly go wrong?"

The absurdity of that statement had both of them laughing and broke the tension, Harry climbed onto Buckbeak's back before offering his hand to Hermione who bravely climbed behind him. Telling her to hold on was unnecessary, as she couldn't squeeze him any tighter.

Hermione had her eyes firmly closed but was forced to open them as they approached the appropriate window. It was small and made of stained glass, which, unfortunately, didn't open. She took out her wand and vanished the window revealing an astonished Sirius Black.

“Hippogriff for Black?” Harry asked before Sirius was on his feet and climbing out the window, he had to jump the last few feet but made it and held on to Hermione. With a flash of inspiration Harry took out his wand and conjured a new window, the stained glass now featured a dog, a stag and a wolf.

Sirius had been sitting trying to compose himself to meet his end like the Gryffindor he was, and then Harry and his friend were outside the vanished window, five stories up, pulling off an unbelievable rescue. When Sirius saw the window that Harry had replaced he couldn't help himself, he started laughing and couldn't stop so Hermione placed a silencing charm on the hysterical wizard.

Buckbeak had no sooner touched down on the tower than Hermione jumped off his back, and Harry thought for a moment she was going to kiss the ground in relief.

Harry climbed off and hugged the relieved witch before Sirius pounced and hugged them both, “Sirius you need to get going and we need to be somewhere else before we're discovered” said Harry while Hermione removed the silencing charm.

“That was bloody brilliant you two, what a team you make, and that window! I almost wish I could see Snape's expression when he finds the room empty.”

“You need to go NOW! Only trust us, Lupin or an elf called Dobby. If anyone else contacts you, especially Dumbledore, run and hide.” Harry's tone left no room for manoeuvre, he was laying down the law and Sirius had to obey until he could get more information.

He climbed back on Buckbeak as Harry said, “we will be in touch soon, I've only just found you and am not going to lose you now.”

He flew away as the teens took the quickest rout through the castle towards the infirmary. When they reached the corridor Hermione pulled Harry into a nearby broom closet. “As much as I would like to love we don't have the time.” Harry didn't say any more as Hermione's lips were now on his.

As she finished the kiss she explained, “we need to wait for Dumbledore to leave and lock us in. When we hear the scream it should be time to move.”

Harry whispered “Dobby!” and the little elf appeared and presented him with a green velvet box. Harry opened it and two platinum rings were inside, they had a knot design with the Potter crest in the centre of the knot. Harry glanced at the girl he loved, “are you sure about this Hermione? My life hasn’t exactly been a bed of roses and you will be forced to see ALL of it, these can’t be removed for at least ten days remember.”

“Harry I love you and nothing I see is going to change that, my only worry is I might murder some of the people who deliberately hurt you. I’m more nervous that you are going to see everything about me, what if you change your mind?”

It was Harry’s turn to kiss her into silence, “Hermione I won’t be changing my mind, you are the most important person in the world to me. When I thought I had lost you I just didn’t care whether I lived or died, without you I had nothing to live for. This is the first step towards the rest of our lives together.” He placed one of the rings on her finger and tenderly kissed her lips.

Hermione was much more confident now, “Harry I have loved you since our meeting in the girls toilet, that is still the bravest thing I have ever seen. I want to spend the rest of my life with you raising our family. I know you wanted to do this in a more romantic setting but we need the protection these rings give us before Dumbledore and Snape try and read our minds.” She placed the other ring on Harry’s finger, as a blue beam of light passed between the rings both felt the connection start.

When they kissed it was a strange but wonderful feeling when they experienced not only their own emotions but the others as well. Hermione was preparing to enter full experimental mode when they heard screams reverberate round the castle, they were sure at least one of them was Snape’s scream of frustration.

It was time to go, with Dobby's help they passed right through the door, leaving the old buzzard's wards still intact, and were just in time to see themselves vanishing from view. Ron was lying on a bed sleeping off his injuries and had missed everything. Harry gave Hermione a quick kiss, "I think we had better get to bed."

Hermione feigned horror, "just because you gave me a ring doesn't mean I'm going to jump into bed with you Potter."

Both laughed and headed quickly to lie down, trying to wipe the smiles off their faces before their visitors arrived.

The door flew open with such force it woke Ron and alerted Madam Pomfrey who tried to head off the three angry men storming into her domain, "What's the meaning of this intrusion? I have sick children here."

"We shall be but a moment Poppy." Answered Dumbledore as he headed straight for Hermione's bed. Harry got the pleasure of the greasy git and an enraged minister. "I know it was you Potter and I'll prove it."

Harry could actually feel the pressure in his head from the legilimency that Snape was illegally performing on him, in front of the minister no less. Had they not been wearing the rings that opened the communications between each other but denied access to everyone else, Snape would have a clear view of everything that had transpired tonight. When he could gleam no information Snape lost it and drew his wand, it was only Dumbledore rushing over and forcing the potion master's hand down that saved Harry being hexed and at least one life.

Dumbledore had met the exact same resistance from Hermione and had turned round just in time to stop Snape making a complete arse of himself; for the old man saving Harry was just a by-product of that event. The old goat practically dragged his tame death eater out the room.

“Excuse me Minister Fudge,” asked Harry calmly “can you tell me what’s happening? Why was I nearly hexed in my bed by a Hogwarts Professor?”

“Don’t be silly boy, why would he do that?”

“Probably because his illegal legilimency attack failed to tell him what he was looking for, you didn’t know that him and Dumbledore practice it all the time on students?” Fudge’s face was a picture “oh and don’t take any sweets he offers you, Snape makes them especially for him, if you know what I mean.”

Fudge now looked like he was suffering a severe bout of constipation.

“Don’t let it worry you Minister, I’m sure Dumbledore will obliviate any memories he doesn’t want you to have, at least that’s what he usually does.”

He left the infirmary at a run as Harry tried to contain his laughter, a bemused Ron asked, “what the hell was that all about?”

“Just winding up the Minister of Magic, Ron.” Said Harry, his glance at Hermione said all that was needed. Ron couldn’t be told anything, as it would just be fished right out his head. This, along with their new relationship, was going to put a strain on their so-called friendship, but both Harry and Hermione knew that their Hogwarts days were over. It was only a matter of choosing the right time and method to reveal their plans.

Harry and Hermione knew what would happen when they fell asleep and neither was looking forward to it but the rings were forcing them to relax and sleep was fast approaching.

-HG-

Hermione had been told she would see everything that had happened to Harry in his life but nothing could have prepared her for experiencing his emotions and pain.

A four-year-old Harry was curled-up in his cupboard silently crying, it had been Dudley's birthday and Harry, knowing from experience he wouldn't be receiving any of the food or cake, had asked his Aunt when his birthday was. He had received a beating from his Uncle and told that his drunken freaks of parents hadn't even bothered to write it down before they died as a worthless boy like him didn't deserve to have a birthday.

Hermione's heart was breaking as she felt the desolation that was coming from the love of her life, had he known what wonderful people his parents were she was sure he would have walked in front of the first bus he saw to be with them, and end this hell on earth.

As the memories downloaded into Hermione's mind she began to experience anger on a scale she never thought herself capable of, watching a bulldog sink its teeth into Harry's malnourished body while being admonished about 'your blood better not poison my dog boy' was the final straw. She felt her magic getting away from her when a calming presence pulled it back. The memories were still painful but she was now using the information to plan their revenge. No one did that to her Harry and got away with it, they were all going to pay, even the dog.

In the infirmary ward all hell had broken loose, there were things flying everywhere as Hermione's magic manifested itself by throwing objects against the walls and ceiling. Poppy had managed to get a shocked Ronald Weasley out the ward when it all stopped. She looked at the other two patients on her ward and noticed that both beds were now side by side with their occupants holding hands. She went to approach the young couple when some objects again started to levitate, as she withdrew everything settled back down. As both appeared in no apparent danger she left them alone and placed Mr Weasley in a private room.

-HP-

If Hermione was unprepared for the emotions coming from her betrothed, Harry was devastated at the hurt she went through growing up. He wasn't sure how this whole time travel thing worked but it seemed mere hours ago that he watched the wonderful girl who

was his future hit with a curse that appeared to end her life. Harry knew he was over protective of those he loved but even that was exaggerated out of all proportion since the fight. Anyone trying to harm his beloved was going to have to go through him first, and since the Department of Mysteries there were very few who could come even close to that feat.

Her experiences from school were no worse than his, she was ostracised and bullied because of her obvious intelligence but it was her home life that shocked him the most. Hermione was sitting calmly discussing the latest episode of bullying with her father who was advising her to confront the bullies while he would contact the school again. She was seven for Merlin's sake and had just spent over an hour crying in her bedroom, where was the hug she so desperately wanted? He could make it all better with a simple 'love you' and a hug, another phone call would just escalate the problem.

As an 'outsider' looking in, Harry could see where her tremendous drive and almost pathological need to please authority figures came from, her parents were highly intelligent people and Hermione tried to show that part of her as often as possible, just so they would notice her. She wasn't so much unloved, just starved of affection by parents who she had never even seen holding hands, it was a wonder Hermione managed to get born at all. A pat on the back for a perfect report card was about as good as it got.

Both had been starved of love their whole life as he silently promised to show he loved her every day, his greatest wish was to have children in the future and between the two of them they now knew exactly what not to do. When you added the overbearing Molly 'two hugs, three meals and I'm your adoptive mother' Weasley they really had covered all the 'do not' bases.

He had felt the terrible hurt she was currently feeling and his magic acted accordingly, Harry didn't know what was happening in the 'real world' but he felt better because of it. He was currently watching Hermione discuss going to Hogwarts with her parents, he could feel the excitement of learning new things but that was outweighed by the surge of hope at a new start. Walking onto the Hogwarts express for

the first time her feelings were almost exactly the same as his, please don't let me be sent home because I don't fit in.

Seeing yourself through another's eyes was disconcerting, seeing Ron through Hermione's eyes was a revelation. From the first time they met Ron had been rude to her, and this had continued every time she approached Harry in his presence. When he felt the hurt he caused her at Halloween, Harry would quite happily feed the redhead to Fluffy. Her emotions when a certain dark haired wizard jumped on the troll in an attempt to save her were off the scale, the boy she had been trying to befriend for a couple of months was literally putting his life on the line for her.

-HG-

Hermione watched through Harry's eyes as she stood frozen in place while the troll wrecked the bathroom, he could see it was only a matter of seconds before she was hit with the club and did the only thing he could think of, he jumped on it. He couldn't believe she had lied to McGonagall for them.

Getting his perspective on flying was awesome, she now understood that after spending most of his life in a cupboard, the freedom a broom afforded provided some of his happiest memories to date. When she had screwed her courage up and hugged Harry before he went to face Quirrell it was the first hug for both of them.

After defeating one evil bastard, another evil bastard sent him to live with a whole tribe of vicious, evil bastards. Watching as he received his meagre rations through a cat flap meant she was really going to get creative with their payback; oh they were so going to suffer for what they did to her Harry.

The hurt he felt over the whole 'Heir of Slytherin' was nothing compared to his sense of loss when he saw her lying in the infirmary petrified, she had felt a wave of jealousy when he received that singing valentine but seeing him sitting holding her petrified hand showed he loved her before any of them even knew it.

Watching as the terrified twelve-year-old fought that basilisk and Riddle, even when he was dieing his thoughts turned to his friend lying in the hospital. Harry saved Dumbledore's job, got Hagrid out of Azkaban before he was once more shipped off to those bastards and the prison that was Privet Drive, only escaping by blowing up his Aunt.

He didn't even make it to Hogwarts, dementors on the train set the tone for the year and a convicted killer after you just added a bit of spice to the mix. Hermione saw that discovering Sirius was his godfather, innocent and wanted Harry to live with him was the best thing he has ever felt. The legalised murder of Sirius Black almost broke Harry James Potter, it was back to being four in the cupboard and his friends were banned from contacting him. Surviving summer only landed him in that flaming tournament.

-HP-

Harry looked through his girl's eyes as she watched him holding on for dear life as his broom kicked and bucked beneath him. This was his first experience of Hermione's 'Help Harry' mode, her whole mind and body was focused on the problem and sprang into action, she'd only been in the magic world a few months yet here she was setting fire to a professor to save her Harry.

He felt her utter elation as she solved the riddle of the Basilisk but her last thought as Hermione was petrified was that she let her Harry down. When she recovered there was only one thought in her mind, find her Harry and she almost thought it was worth being petrified to hug him in the great hall.

Harry looked in horror as he saw himself fall from that broom, Hermione thought he was dead and the feelings were exactly the same as Harry's in the Department of Mysteries. When he got the Firebolt it brought it all back to her and she did something she never would have believed possible, she went to McGonagall. When Harry wasn't speaking to her she cried herself to sleep every night, her only consolation was that he was still alive. She had done it for his safety and he had turned on her, Harry felt like a heel.

When Dumbledore closed the door and Sirius had his soul removed by the Dementor they both cried all night, Professor Lupin was so disgusted with the decision he left not only the school but the magical world and they never heard from him again.

Hermione had defied Dumbledore and written to Harry that summer but her letters kept coming back undelivered, even the ones sent by muggle Royal Mail.

When they got back to Hogwarts she was really worried about him but that kicked into overdrive when his name came out that bloody goblet. As she watched him walk away there were only two things she was certain of, he didn't put his name in the goblet and it was 'Help Harry' time again.

A/N Please review

Chapter 3

-HP-

Harry felt Hermione's terror as she watched him trying to dodge the dragon on his broom; she was also berating herself for not kissing him while hugging before the task as she felt like there might not be another opportunity.

Harry noticed she had her wand in her hand, trying to make up her mind whether to help him or hex the people who made him compete, she was out of her seat like a shot when Harry completed the task and pounced on him when he emerged from the tent.

Harry knew there were memories coming up where he hurt her, and it was only a matter of discovering just how bad. Sure enough when the ball was announced and his attention had turned to Cho, Hermione was devastated. When she was approached in the library by Krum and asked to the ball, she said yes but Harry could now see that her intention was to get him to view her as a girl.

To see his reaction through her eyes was actually quite funny, he was standing there definitely noticing that she was a girl while Hermione was mentally screaming YES!

She had told Victor up front that they would be going as friends as she wasn't interested in anything else, Krum actually seemed quite relieved as he was sick of girls chasing after his fame. He kissed her goodnight on the cheek and she walked into the Gryffindor common room where the prat Ron ruined her night.

-HG-

Hermione felt his emotions run riot as Harry walked into the argument between Ron and her, as she watched herself burst into tears, Harry's insides just melted. She could feel that he loved her but Harry didn't have the emotional experience or tools to deal with it. He could stand up to Voldemort, a basilisk or a fire breathing dragon but the sight of her crying had him totally beaten. He knew he should take

some action but hadn't a clue where to even begin, though punching out Ron was getting near the top of the list.

As Harry was swimming towards the sound of singing he was still trying to work out what he'd sorely miss, talk about being under prepared, if someone had stuck Hedwig at the bottom of the lake then all hell was going to break loose. When he swam into the village he was shocked and confused at what awaited him there. Hermione, Cho, Ron and a little girl were all in some kind of sleep state and tied to posts awaiting rescue.

Hermione was almost laughing at the confusion in Harry's mind, as he didn't know whom he was supposed to rescue, when Cedric appeared and rescued Cho, Harry moved towards Hermione only to be hit by a half-shark. As Krum swam away with Hermione, she was pleased to feel the indignation pouring out of her Harry, how dare that bloody Bulgarian steal his Hermione! It was a god job that she was actually lying down in a hospital bed at the moment because hearing Harry think of her as 'his Hermione' was her greatest wish come true, she would probably have fainted if she wasn't already asleep. He had loved her much earlier than she thought.

Harry looked at the two remaining hostages and was not pleased, Cedric and Victor get to save beautiful girls and he gets Ron bloody Weasley as the thing he'd miss most, someone was having a Giraffe! Did everyone think he was gay? He had half a mind to leave him down here and save the young girl but exiting the lake with a seven-year-old girl under your arm was hardly a good image either. To hell with it, he would take them both.

Sitting dripping-wet on the bank he was delighted to see Hermione wasn't interested in Krum and kept talking to him, her face when Fleur kissed his cheeks for saving her sister was wonderful – just as Ron trying to claim some of the credit was woeful. Harry decided then and there to ask Hermione out after the last task, listening into Harry's thoughts could be harrowing but hearing that made everything worthwhile. She was also more aware of Dumbledore's manipulations, one dance with Krum and she was the thing he'd miss the most? Ron and Harry had hardly spoken all year yet she had been inseparable from the boy she loved.

As Harry entered the maze his only worry was surviving so he could ask Hermione to be his girlfriend, he had no ambition to win the tournament he didn't enter in the first place. For some reason Harry seemed to encounter very few obstacles though when he caught Krum cursing Cedric he took great delight in stunning the Bulgarian.

He eventually reached the centre and there was the cup with Cedric heading straight for it, which would have been fine with Harry except for the Acromantula that the Hufflepuff hadn't seen. Harry fired a spell at it but just appeared to enrage the giant spider that now headed straight for him. Hermione watched as Harry and Cedric teamed up to dispatch the giant insect before making the fateful decision to share the cup.

When Harry returned with Cedric's body both Hermione's were crying, her fifteen-year-old self was sobbing with relief while her younger-older self, watching Harry's memory, was distraught at what her Harry had just come through and the fake Moody was just about to kidnap him right under every one's noses.

Harry was in the infirmary while Fudge basically called him a liar yet still presented him with his winnings; having had the impostor kissed before he could be questioned only confirmed what they both now knew. In the wizarding world, covering your arse and looking good in the press was much more important than truth or justice. The Prophet didn't print lies; it just didn't always print the truth. Knowledge was power that could only be shared with the right people; if everyone knew what was going on they may think that a better job could be done of running things.

-HP-

Harry saw Hermione's memories of her attempts to contact him while at Privet Prison all summer, which were thwarted at every turn, so she was not a happy camper when they met on the train, especially since he wasn't wearing a prefect badge.

She immediately removed her own and placed it in her pocket to the bemusement of Harry though the one watching her memories knew

exactly what was going on. She sat beside Harry and took his hand, when she told him of trying all summer to contact him he squeezed her hand in understanding.

Ron and Ginny weren't so understanding when they entered the compartment, both appeared to be sucking extremely sour lemons according to the expressions on their faces. When Ron proudly announced that he was going to the prefects meeting he was again left with a sour face when Hermione didn't move to join him. She refused to answer the Weasley questions regarding her badge, or lack off, and they eventually got tired of it though they continued to glare at their joined hands.

When the prefects were told to show the new first years to their dorms, Hermione sitting unmoving with Harry drew the wrath of McGonagall. Her reply would be talked about all year, "I'm sorry Professor but I am unable to accept the position of prefect as it appears the badges weren't awarded on merit, when you have the Tri-Wizard champion who doesn't make prefect then there must be some other agenda being adhered to. I would have written but it would appear that every letter I sent over the summer was returned to me." She returned the badge before leaving the hall, hand in hand with Harry.

She found herself in McGonagall's office the following morning, which proved enlightening, her head of house was trying to lean on her to accept the badge since she knew Weasley would be useless but Hermione was having none of it. "Professor I believe this decision is as much a slur on Harry's character as those ludicrous articles the Prophet seems so fond of printing, if I accepted that badge I would be condoning that slur – I could never do that. My loyalty to Harry far outweighs that to Gryffindor or even Hogwarts." McGonagall was left with no comeback.

The glares coming from the youngest Weasleys put both of them on their guard, all food and drink would be getting checked from now on. A quiet word with Lavender was called for, "could you watch out for me? Ron doesn't seem to be pleased the way my relationship with Harry is going, if I suddenly start spouting eternal love for the red haired arsehole please drag me along to see Madam Pomphry. Oh and

please keep it quiet.” Harry was laughing at the memory, the whole school would know by tomorrow night.

-HG-

Hermione wasn't laughing at Harry's memory of their first defence class under Umbridge, she repeatedly tried to antagonise them throughout the class but both were polite and said nothing that could be used for administering a detention. Neville approached and asked if he could study defence with them, as they weren't going to learn anything here, he brought his girlfriend along – Luna Lovegood.

The Weasley menace came to a head when they sat down to breakfast a few weeks later and found their juice spiked, two stunners and two accio potions later and they marched up to the top table, presenting their evidence to a shocked Professor McGonagall. Dumbledore interfered at once and gave both Weasleys detentions but Harry and Hermione refused to be in the same house as someone who would put a potion into your food, they were quickly joined by Neville as all three demanded either the expulsion of the Weasleys or to be resorted.

McGonagall was furious, only the headmaster could throw students out of Hogwarts and she knew he was as thick as thieves with the Weasleys so that wouldn't happen, she was going to lose her two best students and Neville had been showing a lot more confidence since taking the Lovegood girl to the Yule Ball.

Dumbledore blustered, threatened, cajoled before capitulating and the hat was brought to the hall. The trio were all sorted into the house they requested - Hufflepuff, much to the delight of their new housemates. All three had seen a delighted Umbridge taking notes of the whole event.

They had wanted to stay below the radar and a Hufflepuff Harry was a lot less threatening, they were caught in a power struggle between Fudge and Dumbledore but since they liked neither one they were letting them slug it out.

Fudge got his Christmas present early when the Quibbler ran a front page story on the Weasleys attempt to give the boy who lived a love potion. The backlash saw Dumbledore sacked from Hogwarts, Arthur Weasley forced to resign in shame and the new headmaster, Umbridge, threw out all the Weasleys as neither Ron or Ginny were capable of brewing the potion they were caught with.

As Harry was clearly no longer 'Dumbledore's man' there was nothing to be gained and everything could be lost by harassing the wizard so he was left alone. This was exactly what they wanted as the four continued to train in the room Dobby showed them.

-HP-

Harry relived the best Christmas of his life through Hermione's eyes, she had mentioned that her parents were going skiing and she hated it, when Luna invited them to stay with her. The two couples had become really close friends and Luna stopped mentioning imaginary animals when she realised that they actually were her friends.

The loony was just an unconscious act to stop people getting to close so she wouldn't have to deal with the emotional loss when they left her. It took the wizard with the lowest confidence in the school to ask the one pretty girl he didn't think would say no to a dance and the results were verging on the spectacular. Training and studying every night and each weekend had boosted everyone's confidence and made them a tight knit group.

Since there was no Dumbledore, and neither Sprout nor Umbridge knew Harry had never left the castle at Christmas, there was no welcoming party at the station and the nightbus delivered the three of them to Luna's home. Harry had a thousand galleons in his trunk left over from summer, since he wasn't allowed out of prison or able to attend Hogsmead, so a monster-shopping day was planned before Christmas.

Using the floo to the Leaky Cauldron where they met Neville the first item on the agenda was bottomless & weightless bags for everyone. After that the four friends made their way to Gringotts where Harry was going to get some gold exchanged to muggle money and visit his

vault. Feeling Hermione's emotions when they found out the Weasley's had been 'visiting' his vault was scary. Harry demanded that his entire vault be emptied, except for one Knut, and be converted to muggle currency. He left the bank with over three hundred thousand pounds in his bag. Hermione had a bank account so he put most of it in there, he didn't care about interest, he didn't want the Weasleys or Dursleys getting it. Hermione wasn't happy about the situation but she could understand his reasoning and he had no desire to have an account with Privet Drive as his address.

The rest of the day was shopping, eating, movie, eating and even more shopping as the two purebloods saw the sights of muggle London, in other words they had a blast!

Luna's father was a little eccentric but in a good way, you could sit all night and listen to his stories and he seemed to thrive on the company. When they tried to thank him for allowing them to visit he had tears in his eyes as he explained that it had been a few years since this house had been filled with such joy and laughter, he felt he should be thanking them.

Heading back to Hogwarts the rejuvenated teens threw themselves into their training and studying. Umbridge had no problems in the school and with no Voldemort activity reported Fudge decided to use the 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it' philosophy so he did nothing.

-HG-

Hermione watched Harry's memories as Voldemort started sending him visions of a corridor culminating in the history of magic exam. She watched herself try to talk him out of it but having seen the vision herself now there was no way Harry could have ignored the torturing of Luna's dad. They were using wands to place cuts on the journalist claiming that since Potter spent the holidays with him then he must know the prophecy – there was blood everywhere. With no one outside their group they could trust they took a broomstick ride to the ministry. Luna was a pretty good flier so she took Neville while Harry took Hermione – straight into the trap.

Hermione watched Harry duck and weave while sending off spells at the death eaters but when he saw her get slashed and go down from that curse, Harry's magic went mental.

He was vaguely aware that Neville was muttering something while supporting Luna, but the broken nose made it unintelligible, while Harry's glowing green eyes fell on the wizard who had murdered his Hermione. The death eater literally ripped into two pieces and his death screams reverberated throughout the ministry, Harry calmly walked on looking for his next victim. Four dead eaters later he came across Lucius who hit him with the cruciatus curse, Harry just stood there as the curse hit him in the chest with no visible effects. In reality Harry was using the curse like a conduit and quickly draining all of Malfoy's magic into himself, he had no idea how he was accomplishing this and neither did the Hermione watching his memories. A kick in the face of the now kneeling muggle Malfoy put him out of the fight.

The crazy bitch that hit him with the death curse actually wet herself when he just absorbed the spell and kept walking towards her, he was using neither wand nor words, just thinking about what he wanted done and his magic was doing the rest. He walked right passed boneless Bella who was in severe pain as all her organs pushed down on top of one another causing her death within minutes.

McNair was just vaporised with all that remained of the executioner being a greasy spot on the wall. Harry was making his way back to the atrium, killing every death eater he saw. When he got there he hit the jackpot, Voldemort.

Harry took the glass ball out of his pocket, "this what you're after?" he casually dropped it in front of him and while Voldemort was watching intently, Harry started siphoning off Tom's magic.

"What is this power you have Potter?" asked Voldemort before realising what Harry was doing, he hit the young wizard with a cruciatus as the floo system started depositing people into the atrium.

Harry was struggling to cope with the now double feed and the sheer amount of magical power involved, he put his head back, opened his mouth and screamed as his magic let go.

Harry's magic knocked out every pillar or wall on this full floor, which brought the whole ministry of magic building pancakeing down on their heads, it was non-survivable, and everyone in the building and a few outside it died.

-oOoOo-

Harry opened his eyes and found himself in a place unlike anything he'd seen before, there were no walls or ceiling that could be seen, just two sofa's, a table and countless library shelves filled with books. He was trying to figure out where he was when something moving at speed registered at the edge of his vision, Harry quickly spun round but nothing could save him from the ferocious attack.

A brown-eyed, bushy-haired bombshell exploded right on top of him as Hermione threw herself at the man she loved, her arms were round his neck while her legs encircled his waist as she proceeded to snog him for all she was worth. Harry wasn't sure where they were but at this precise moment he didn't care because this was heaven, they were interrupted when someone spoke, "well there's something you don't see every day!"

A second later Harry and Hermione had their wands pointing at James and Lily Potter.

"Oh so that's the way it is, greet each other with hugs and kisses but we get wands pointed at us! He must take that from your side of the family Lily,' said James.

Harry's legs buckled and, as Hermione was still wrapped around him, they hit the floor in a heap though their wands still covered the two newcomers.

Lily smacked James on the back of the head, "that's a fine first impression to make on our son and his girlfriend, and just how was he supposed to pick up pointing a wand at someone from my family?"

Honestly James!" said Lily as she moved forward and helped Hermione regain her feet. She then pulled Harry up and squeezed him so tight he thought a rib would break.

"Oh Harry you couldn't have picked a better girl to spend the rest of your life with," said Lily, "even now she's standing there, with her wand in her hand, ready to fight for the man she loves." Lily opened her arms and invited Hermione into the hug, she was reluctant but as soon as she got there it just felt so right that the tears started to flow. Harry had started crying the moment his mother had hugged him, but now with the two women he loved holding him, the dam broke and all those years of holding his emotions in check were washed away.

James joined wrapping his arms round the two teens as they stood as a family, trying for a fleeting moment to fill a void that existed in each of them. They eventually had to sit down, Harry ended up in the middle of both women who showed no signs of letting him go ever again. His dad chuckled and sat on the other couch as Harry asked the all important question, "are we dead?"

"That's a question that we can answer later," said James "there are some things we need to tell you then a decision will have to be made. This situation is a junction in time, there are two paths that can be taken with the consequences affecting everyone in the world – so no pressure you two!"

"James if you can't be serious and do this properly then we could end up losing this chance, behave."

Properly chastised he continued, "when you let your magic go in the ministry it destroyed Voldemort's body but it also caused massive damage to the magical world. When the death eaters started throwing dark curses at you it set off alarms, and most of the senior members of the ministry, as well as all the Aurors and Dumbledore, had entered the building when it came down. The reason that this is a catastrophe is Voldemort isn't dead,"

Both teens' shot up, "what!" Harry couldn't believe it, "How could he possibly survive that?"

It was Lily that replied, "The same way he survived that Halloween, you killing him in first and second year as well as again today. He split his soul and placed it in objects, creating horcruxes, and he cannot die until these are destroyed."

Hermione was crying again, "all those plans, all that work, for nothing. We couldn't even take him with us!"

Lily was hugging the crying witch as Harry just sat stunned; he'd given it his best shot and came up short.

James continued, "Umbridge will become minister for magic and start passing laws that will further fragment the wizarding world, anyone not pureblood will probably leave the country, and by the time Voldemort returns all that will be required is for him to make an appearance and the ministry will fold like a deck of cards."

Harry felt as if he was going to be sick, his mother pulled him closer before speaking, "that was the bad news but there is another alternative. You can be sent back to a time when you can do most good."

"Time travel?" asked Hermione

"Yes" James replied "but this time you will be better prepared. It's said 'Knowledge is Power' and we intend to prove that right. The night Voldemort hit you with that curse he unintentionally created a horcrux, you!"

Hermione caught on immediately, "The scar."

"Right again" answered James "but should you go back the horcrux would be gone but all the knowledge Voldemort had in his head is stored in these books here, a residue of the horcrux. They are not really books, it's just the way your mind has organised all the information as you will, in effect, have access to everything he knew."

Harry sat quietly thinking through his options, in the end it was his father who couldn't wait any longer, "well?"

“I’m trying to think of a reason for going back but can’t think of one, so peoples lives will take a down turn – my life has been shit ever since the night you were murdered and I haven’t seen anyone making sacrifices to try and change it. Everyone I’ve ever loved, everything I’ve dreamed about is here with me now. Why would I want to give this up and go back where everyone tries to control my life? If my options are this or the Dursleys then my choice is not difficult.”

His parents were speechless; they were so sure their Gryffindor son would charge forward that they had never even considered this a possibility. While they were sharing bemused expressions with each other, Hermione took Harry’s face in both hands and tenderly kissed him before speaking.

“Harry I would like to give you a reason to go back, in fact I would like to give you many reasons to go back – our unborn children. My greatest wish is to have our children and watch them growing up, showering them with love. If we stay here we would be happy, I’ll be happy anywhere as long as we’re together, but something will always be missing, taking your son on his first broom ride or the daughter who will have her daddy wrapped round her little finger before she can even speak. I want this for you so badly I would face Voldemort myself if I had to but it’s your decision to make.”

Harry took his wonderful girl’s face in his hands and kissed her, pouring all his emotions into that one gesture and leaving his parents misty eyed. “Hermione you just described my deepest dreams and desires, and in those dreams you are always by my side just as you are in life. Would you do me the honour of being my wife?”

“Any time, any place, I’ll be there – just so there’s no doubts here, that’s a definite YES!”

Their resulting embrace/snog was only broken by the sound of his crying father blowing his nose, this was the opening Lily required to hug the couple and welcome Hermione to the family, immediately followed by James.

Once everyone had somewhat settled down, Hermione asked a question “if the information is in Harry’s head, is there any way I can access it?”

Harry’s father wore a frown, “there is but I’m not sure I would recommend it” the looks both teens were giving him forced James to continue, “in the Potter family vaults there’s a special set of betrothal rings that haven’t been used for centuries. They were made for an ancestor who was unsure if the woman he loved wanted him or the title of Lady Potter. The rings will basically give all of your memories to whoever wears the other ring, you will also be able to speak to each other without talking and Harry can grant you access to any part of his mind. Be warned though, the rings can’t be removed before ten days and our ancestor ended up hating the woman. While you wear the rings no one else will be able to access your minds and your secrets will be safe from everyone but each other.”

“What are the Potter family vaults?” asked Harry

“That bastard Dumbledore!”

Harry and Hermione were shocked, not at the sentiments that they both agreed with but at the venom and language coming from Lily Potter.

“I know you both dislike the old goat but when you hear what he’s done you might want to go back and kill him again. He’s done so much it’s hard to know where to begin so we’ll go right back to the start of all our troubles – that prophecy.”

James took up the story, “Snape heard part of the prophecy and told his master, Voldemort. There were two children that fitted the profile, you and Neville, but he chose you and marked you with that scar. After he was banished Sirius tried to take you with him but Dumbledore had decided you were going to the Dursleys and used Hagrid to fetch you there, leaving you on the doorstep like a newspaper. Our will clearly stated you were NOT to go there under any circumstances and contained a list of people willing to take you. He sealed the unread will and declared himself your magical guardian illegally, and with Sirius somehow being denied a trial there was only

Remus who knew we had a will. Dumbledore played the werewolf card and denied him the right to any contact with you at all, Remus was as much a prisoner as Sirius and his whole world crumbled that night. By law Dumbledore should have told you about your inheritance when you reached eleven but if you knew that you were the richest person in Britain with many houses and the ability to claim emancipation you would have been out of Privet Drive and out of his control faster than he could list his titles. We also suspect he has someone working with him in Gringotts to help him pull this off.”

His mother was doing her best to convince him to return, “If you go back you will be Lord Potter and emancipated, Hermione would come under the protection of the House of Potter as your betrothed, your rings will be invisible unless you specifically tell the person. You never need to go anywhere near Privet Drive again, unless you want to kick some Dursley arse, and you will be able to live anywhere in the world and hire magical tutors, keeping you away from Dumbledores manipulations. You will keep all your memories and magical power; you know the prophecy and how to defeat him. All the knowledge of the horcruxes are here, stored in your mind, and though we don’t know when you will go back to but know it will be a time that you can do the most good.”

They chatted for a while before James and Lily seemed to receive a message, “we’re sorry but you have to answer now.”

Harry and Hermione held each other tight before answering, “we’re going back.”

-oOoOo-

As they waited both suddenly looked as if they had been petrified before falling into each other’s arms. “Where are we? When are we Hermione?” asked Harry.

“Oh Harry, your scar is fainter and my teeth are enormous again!” she looked around and saw Buckbeak, “This is the night Sirius was kissed, Harry we may be able to save him.”

-oOoOo-

A thirteen-year-old Lord Harry James Potter awoke in the infirmary holding his fourteen-year-old betrothed's hand, Sirius was saved, Remus wouldn't leave the magical world, he was never going back to the Dursleys and extremely angry Albus Dumbledore was standing at the bottom of his bed.

Harry ignored the irate ingrate and looked into Hermione's eyes, he was really worried that now she had seen all his memories she wouldn't want to be with him anymore. "Are you ok love?" he nervously asked.

Hermione's beaming smile was worth more than any words but her "wonderful!" made his heart soar.

Dumbledore was not used to being ignored, far less his mental probes being rebuffed, and he was not a happy wizard. "Lord Potter I demand an explanation."

Harry and Hermione had the exact same thought, someone had talked.

A/N the fourth and fifth year memories covered are to demonstrate that it wasn't the Hermione and Harry of canon that came back in time. Only relevant memories were described as these years no longer exist except in the minds of Harry and Hermione.

Chapter 4

Dumbledore was not used to being ignored, far less his mental probes being rebuffed, and he was not a happy wizard. “Lord Potter I demand an explanation.”

Harry and Hermione had the exact same thought, someone had talked.

Harry decided to see just how far he could push Dumbledore, “I’m sorry sir, I think I must have done accidental magic. I was having a nightmare after hearing my innocent godfather was kissed by a Dementor and just woke up next to Hermione. I have to say though, given a choice, I’d rather wake up holding Hermione’s hand than Ron’s.”

“You know perfectly well that Sirius escaped and that...”

Dumbledore was intentionally interrupted by Harry, “What? He escaped? Why didn’t anyone tell me?”

“Why do you think we were here last night?” Dumbledore was almost shouting now.

“I’ve no idea sir, you came crashing through the door then, after making my head hurt, a Hogwarts professor tried to curse me before you dragged him out. In front of the Minister of Magic to, he didn’t seem to happy when he left here last night.”

“You know what I’m asking Lord Potter.” Yes, he was definitely shouting now.

“I’m sorry sir I have no idea, I’m not really a morning person though, if Hermione here didn’t remind me every morning what books we needed I’m sure I wouldn’t be doing half as well in my classes. I haven’t even had my morning cup of tea yet, what time is it anyway Hermione?”

A purple faces Dumbledore screamed, “how did you find out about Lord Potter?”

“Oh that,” said Harry dismissively before continuing to lie “Hermione found it when we were researching ways to help Buckbeak with his trial, quite a simple procedure really. Did you know I could have done it since my eleventh Birthday? Anyway we couldn’t think of a way to use it to save Buckbeak, I don’t suppose he managed to escape as well?”

“Yes the blasted Hippogriff escaped, why did you claim your lordship? Do you have any idea the extra work you have caused me to try and clean up this mess?” roared Dumbledore; his veins were now protruding in a reasonable impression of uncle Vernon.

“I fail to see that me claiming my rightful inheritance is any of your business Headmaster.” The last word was said with emphasis.

Dumbledore was now in full retreat, “You just don’t understand Harry, and some things are better left for me to handle for you.”

“I’m sorry headmaster but I fully intend to take up the mantle of Head of House Potter, now according to the books we read on the subject that means only people of equal or higher status can call me by my first name. Your not a lord are you sir?” Harry asked in his most non-threatening voice.

“No Harry I’m not but...”

“Then kindly follow the proper procedure sir. You of all people should appreciate the necessity of protocol in our society.” Stated Harry

Hermione’s overbite was making an impression in her bottom lip as she tried her hardest not to burst out laughing at Dumbledore’s antics. She decided to stir the cauldron some more. “Oh Harry, that means you won’t have to go to those disgusting relatives anymore. I’ll be able to tell my dad that he doesn’t need to see our lawyer about contacting the authorities with details of your mistreatment. As a Lord you will be able to do it yourself in front of the Wizengamot, you might even be able to get a trial for Sirius.”

Dumbledore's colour had paled considerably, he was almost grey now. "There's no need to be hasty, I'm sure we can work something out Harry."

"I'm sorry sir but that's Lord Potter and my arrangements out with Hogwarts again fall under the heading "none of your business" so please don't concern yourself with it, I'm sure you have enough on your plate with an escaped convict and dangerous creature both disappearing from Hogwarts." The headmaster almost appeared ready to reach for his wand before an angry Poppy pushed him out the way to check both her patients.

"You said two minutes headmaster and you've had a lot longer than that." The dismissal in Poppy's voice left Albus with nowhere to go but out the door.

"Where's Ron?" Hermione asked the healer.

"Oh he was released for breakfast, you two seem fine so you can go and get cleaned up, it will be lunchtime shortly," she replied.

Both left and were heading to the dorms to change when they noticed a blond Ravenclaw limping along the corridor, as they got closer they could see it was Luna and the reason for her limping had Hermione in tears while Harry struggled to control his anger.

Hermione hugged the shocked girl, "Luna, I never realised it was this bad. I'm so sorry but don't worry we'll help you with this."

The blond haired witch hadn't a clue what was happening, she knew this girl was Hermione Granger and everyone recognised Harry but what were they doing in the corridor talking to her, Hermione's hug almost panicked her until she heard the sincerity in her voice. Luna was sure she meant her no harm and Harry's actions confirmed this.

Harry pulled out his wand and took an oath, "I swear on my magic I will be Luna Lovegood's friend and never knowingly harm her." Hermione repeated the procedure.

“Luna we can’t explain at the moment but we truly are your friends and I will take you under the protection of my house, Hermione and I are betrothed and have no intention of returning here next term but we want you to come with us.” Said Harry

Luna saw their betrothal rings appear as well as Harry’s family ring.

“This is a secret Luna so please don’t say anything until we’re ready but we do want you to come with us, no one will bother you again, we promise.” Hermione still had tears in her eyes as she looked at the state of her best female friend.

These were the first kind words Luna had heard since starting at Hogwarts nearly two years ago. The school thought she dressed oddly but what most of them were unaware of was that she could only wear what her housemates didn’t hide. Today’s ensemble was really bad with the two right shoes leaving her left foot in agony. She didn’t know what it was about these two but something just felt right, almost like déjà vu.

They helped Luna to the Gryffindor dorms where Hermione loaned her some clothes and a pair of shoes before the trio headed off to lunch.

They entered the great hall and the two Gryffindors followed Luna over to the Ravenclaw table and sat down with her, they were hardly seated when Marietta Edgecombe interrupted them, “not enough room at your own table or are you just interested in loony’s lies?”

The rest of the table were snickering at Marietta’s wit but the three were just casually helping themselves to lunch, when they had sufficient food on their plates Harry replied, “no Miss Edgecombe there is plenty of room at the Gryffindor table but we wanted to have lunch with our friend Luna.” There was silence as everyone waited for the punchline; this was a joke - right?

Harry continued speaking in a calm tone, “you see Luna is a good friend of ours and under the protection of the House of Potter so I would suggest that anyone sitting here who has taken or hidden any of her belongings immediately go and return them.”

There was some nervous laughter before Cho Chang spoke, “big bad Potter is so scary sticking up for the retard, those tactics might work in your house of dorks but here in Ravenclaw we...” the rest was cut off by the screams of people at the table, all of whom were looking at Cho in horror. Cho looked down at her hands and saw they were covered in wrinkles; she put her hands to her face where her beautiful smooth skin had more wrinkles than last weeks bed sheets. She ran out the hall screaming while holding her face in her wrinkly hands.

Harry glanced at Hermione who had enjoyed that far too much, “payback?” he asked.

She just nodded, “ever since she tried to kiss you I wanted to rip her arm off and beat her with the wet end.” Luna looked genuinely confused for a change, “we will explain it to you Luna but you’re going to have to trust us for now.”|

Flitwick came rushing over, “what are you two Gryffindors doing causing trouble at this table?”

Hermione was still pissed at the treatment of her friend and here was a professor she respected blaming them without even finding out the facts. They were going to find out that a pissed off Hermione Granger was a formidable sight.

“Well since your asking so nicely Professor, we’re doing your job for you by putting a stop to the vicious bullying of a young student in your house. Oh and just to reiterate to those denser members of the so-called clever house, immediate means get your arses in gear and return my friend’s belongings before you all end up like the delightful Miss Chang.”

There was pandemonium as witches climbed over one another in their haste to get to the dorm and return Luna’s stuff. The diminutive head of Ravenclaw just stood there, unsure of what to do next, “Miss Granger if there was a problem you should have come to me with it.”

“Yea like that was going to work, you had two years to sort this out, what we did took us two minutes and, trust me on this, they will never bother her again.” Raged Hermione.

“I can’t fix something if I don’t know about the problem,” replied Flitwick.

Hermione was having none of it, “then I suggest you sack the Ravenclaw prefects since they’re obviously not doing their jobs properly.”

The Ravenclaw head was starting to become irate at this slip of a girl highlighting the deficiencies of his house, “and I suppose Gryffindor is a utopia of peace and harmony?” he asked sarcastically.

“Not with the twisted twins present, who think if they call their form of bullying a prank then it’s not only acceptable but they expect praise for it. It’s not cool but cruel to have younger housemates in a constant state of terror because they don’t know what’s going to happen next. Students like Neville keep getting their confidence destroyed by continuous and vindictive pranks, stopping him becoming the great wizard he is.” Hermione was on a roll that nothing was going to stop.

The Gryffindor table was a mixture of sniggers at the thought of Neville as a great wizard, and stares that anyone would dare to challenge the twins; terrible consequences usually followed that folly.

McGonagall decided to intervene before things got out of hand and detentions and points got dragged into the issue, “I hardly think a few harmless jokes could be held responsible for Mr Longbottom’s abilities. If I remember correctly Mr Potter’s own father was prone to carry out the occasional prank.”

Harry stood on the bench and stared over at Neville, he was sitting with his head down hating the attention, “Neville, there has been a Longbottom standing beside a Potter every time either went into battle for centuries, I would be proud to have you by my side when that time comes again. Yes professor my father and his friends played pranks but it was a time of war and they had chosen their side. Their pranks were set against a background of death eater

recruitment, and seeing the people putting pressure on others to join Voldemort end up with pink hair and without robes gave others hope that the dark could be defeated. On the other hand the Weasleys appear to be using students as unwilling test subjects for products they hope will make them money.”

The squeals of terror at the mention of Voldemort's name had Harry shaking his head, “I really think I am going to adopt the Hufflepuff philosophy,” the smug looks from that table were soon wiped off their faces by his next comments, “that means I look after my family and am loyal to my friends, and the rest of the world can go and screw itself. I've kicked his arse three times now yet you people still seem to want more, just what is it you think I owe you? Well here's some news for you, I owe you nothing and that's what you're going to get! The next time the dark dork turns up you're on your own, the death eater wannabee's will all flock like sheep to kiss the half blood's robes while the rest of you hide, too afraid even to say his name far less fight back. You make me want to vomit!”

Harry took Hermione and Luna by the hand and started to leave a totally silent great hall when a voice he knew couldn't remain quiet called out, “Potter, how dare you call the dark lord a half blood like you.”

The trio turned to be greeted with an indignant Draco Malfoy, Harry's wand did the ‘Tom Marvolo Riddle = I am Lord Voldemort’ in flames through the air.

“He's a former Hogwarts head boy and his father was a muggle, I say was because the psychopath killed his father and grandparents while he was still a student here. Now what makes you think anyone should listen to a squib who's family kiss the robes of someone like that and their father gets beat-up by a house elf.”

A mad Malfoy fired a curse straight at Harry but Hermione, who immediately recognised the curse, stepped in front of her betrothed and deliberately let the spell hit her. Harry looked towards Snape as Hermione's front teeth began growing, “are you going to take any action professor?”

"I don't see any difference in Miss Granger's appearance but I think that Gryffindor will be docked fifty points and you can have a week of detentions with me for that little flame spell you cast earlier." Snape's smirk was pure evil.

Harry glanced towards the head of Gryffindor and realised that, as he expected, no help was to be found there, the trio headed back to the infirmary where Hermione could get her front teeth shrunk to the size she wanted.

McGonagall just stood there with her head down, hearing one of her Gryffindors not only criticise their own house but basically tell the magical community they were on their own had shocked her to the very marrow of her bones. She wondered what Albus would make of it; she also wondered where he headed off to today in such a hurry.

Hermione was receiving treatment when Harry heard a nervous cough behind him and turned to see Neville standing there, screwing up his courage Neville asked, "did you really mean what you said Harry? You would want me beside you?"

Harry pulled Neville into a one-armed man hug, "Nev, I know you don't believe this but you're a hell of a wizard. With Hermione by my side, you watching our backs and Luna taking care of all of us we will be a force to be reckoned with. I know you don't believe this yet but Hermione and I trust you with our lives."

Neville gave the impression of a mild mannered reporter turning into his alter ego, he appeared to grow taller and his shoulders squared as he proudly looked at his friend. Here was the wizard that Neville respected more than any other, including the headmaster, someone who continually stood up for what he believed in and, despite the odds, never compromised and never lost. He thought that Neville Longbottom was good enough to stand with him and this was a completely new experience for the shy, young wizard; he'd never had anyone think he was worth anything before.

"Neville there will be some things happening over the next few days that you may not understand but please believe me when I say that any plans we have will always include you and Luna," he turned

towards the Ravenclaw girl, "Luna you can trust Neville with your life, he will never let you down and is the true definition of a friend."

Neville and Luna looked at each other with both wearing shy smiles; tellingly they didn't break eye contact until Hermione came from behind the medical screen flashing her 'new' smile. Harry pulled out his wand and a couple of plaques appeared above two beds, one read Snape while the other had Malfoy printed on it, "just making reservations in case the ward gets busy," they could all see Harry wasn't joking.

The quartet left the infirmary to be confronted by a quintet of riled redheads, Ron wasn't pleased not to be part of the group in front of them, Ginny wasn't pleased that Hermione and Luna were, the twins were seriously miffed at being called bullies while Percy 'head boy' Weasley wasn't sure why he was upset, he just knew he was. Percy looked as if he'd just let go with a wet fart onto his starched underwear, the problem was of his own making but in typical Weasley fashion he wanted to blame somebody else for his mess.

Ron was attempting rightful indignation but just sounded like a ginger whinger, "Harry, I thought I was your best friend, what are you playing at slagging off Gryffindor?"

'Ron, I have only one best friend,' he pulled Hermione closer as both of them lost themselves in a kiss that had all the watchers speechless. The couple were still looking lovingly into each other's eyes when Harry spoke again, "I wasn't slagging Gryffindor, I was calling out the twins for their bullying"

The Weasleys protested en mass but that was cut short when a spell hit the twins, transforming one into a greasy git and the other into darling Draco, what really turned everyone's stomachs was that they then proceeded to re-enact the kiss that Harry and Hermione had shared the minute before.

When the spell wore off both twins looked ready to commit murder but Harry silently summoned their wands before commentating on the prank, "some people might think that was extremely funny, some extremely sick. Was it a prank or was it bullying? It all depends on

your point of view. From my point of view that was a pre-emptive strike, these people here are my friends and under my protection, if anything happens to them Dumbledore and Trelawney will be 'getting it on' on top of the Gryffindor table some lunchtime. Do I make myself clear?"

Both twins reluctantly nodded, Harry handed them back their wands before walking away with his arm round Hermione's waist, Hermione waited till they were passing Ginny before returning the gesture and leaning her head on Harry's shoulder. She nearly lost it to laughter when she heard Harry's voice in her mind 'you really are a little minx'. Neville and Luna looked towards each other, shrugged and followed the couple down the corridor.

The four ended up in an empty classroom as Neville was brought up to speed with the same Information Luna had, he was delighted at the news of their betrothal. Harry and Hermione were giving classes a miss but the other two had to go.

Remus Lupin was packing when Hermione and Harry entered, his eyebrows shot up as the couple proceeded to dispense locking and silencing charms. "What have you heard Remus?" asked Harry.

"I haven't really heard anything, Albus just smiled when I asked him how he managed to save Sirius." He was astounded at Hermione's heated reply.

"That's because the old bastard did nothing to help Sirius, he wanted him killed so Harry wouldn't have a godfather and would need to rely on the old tosser for support. We saved Sirius but wouldn't tell the old coot anything."

"I proclaimed myself head of House Potter and we think Dumbledore is trying to get it reversed to have me under his control, my betrothed and I can't allow that to happen under any circumstances. We need your help to get to Gringotts as something there is very wrong." Said Harry.

Remus saw the rings appear on the youngsters fingers, he was also a marauder and knew he wasn't being told the full story but here was

the son of one best friend who, along with his betrothed, had just saved the life of his other best friend. "When do we leave?"

-oOoOo-

Just over an hour later and it was three different people who walked up the steps of Gringotts, they had travelled by floo from the Three Broomsticks to the Leaky Cauldron, stepped into muggle London to use a payphone followed by a quick trip to Madam Malkin's and were now attired in very expensive robes.

Remus and Hermione had strenuously protested their purchase but Harry pointed out that today was all about making an impression so the robes were an investment; both his and Hermione's robes had the Potter family crest on them. The Potter family ring pressed into the receipt was an accepted and preferred payment method anywhere in the magical world.

They had just entered Gringotts when the one person they didn't want to see came racing over towards them.

"What are you doing here? You must return to school immediately" Dumbledore was trying to shepherd them out the bank but all three of them stood firm. The old wizard was getting angry and drawing attention to the escalating confrontation. "I demand that you return to Hogwarts, you have no business being here. If you don't return immediately then you will face expulsion."

Harry let some of his power show, as his magical aura was visible for everyone to see. "I am Lord Harry James Potter and who are you old man to tell me I have no business here at Gringotts bank. Are you afraid I'll discover just how deep your manipulations run? Who told you my status at the bank had changed when I gave strict instructions that were not to happen? With what authority did you disregard my parent's will? Who gave you the right to remove me from my innocent godfather and place me with muggles that the will clearly stated was never to happen? As you can see old man we have plenty business to discuss here and the answers will determine our next course of action."

They had now drawn quite a crowd and the boy-who-lived having a very public argument with the leader of the light would be in the Prophet before long. The mention of banking improprieties had goblins running for their supervisors and there was now a group of senior goblin officials heading in their direction.

The situation was spiralling out of Albus's control; the questions Harry was asking were ones that he definitely didn't want the answers to be known. He had to do something quickly, "Miss Granger you have no authority to be here and will return with me immediately."

He made a move towards the young witch when Harry stepped in front of her, "Miss Granger is here under my protection and with the knowledge and blessing of her parents. Any attempt to remove her will be regarded as an attack on the house of Potter and I will react accordingly." Harry had his wand pointed at the headmasters crooked nose as gasps came from the now considerable number of onlookers.

"Lord Potter," said one of the goblins, "Could you please lower your wand, you and your betrothed will come to no harm while in Gringotts"

Harry's wand never wavered nor his eyes leave the wizard who it was pointed at, he couldn't help notice the look of absolute terror at the goblin's use of betrothed concerning Hermione. "Sir, can I ask your name?"

"I am called Master Zutekin, Lord Potter."

"Well here's the deal Master Zutekin, I lower my wand and any harm comes to any of us while in Gringotts and I will hold you personally responsible." Harry left no doubt in anyone's mind what he meant by 'personally responsible.'

The goblin gave a slight bow before speaking. "That would be acceptable Lord Potter."

Harry lowered his wand and before anyone had time to react Albus found himself with a sword poking him in the back as he was 'politely asked' to vacate the premises.

Harry, Hermione and a totally bewildered Remus followed Master Zutekin into a plush office where another goblin introduced themselves, "I am Sickyle and in charge of the Potter accounts..," Harry interrupted him immediately.

"That is still to be decided, I want to see the manager and I want to see him now!"

An extremely nervous Sickyle tried to placate Harry but he was well beyond that stage, "If I don't see the manager I will empty the Potter vaults and give an interview to the Prophet explaining why I have no confidence in Gringotts bank, now do I get to see the manager?"

Much to the displeasure of Sickyle, Master Zutekin intervened and had the group follow him to an even plusher office, which turned out to be no more than the waiting room for admittance to see Director Ragnok, Manager of Gringotts and Leader of the British Goblins.

When they entered the room Harry's demeanour changed noticeably, "Forgive this intrusion Director but I have been put in the position of not knowing whom I can trust at Gringotts, but if I can't trust you then there is no hope for this country."

"You are most welcome Lord Potter, trust is a sacred thing at Gringotts and the thought of anyone breaking a trust distresses me greatly. Can you give me the details of this alleged transgression?"

Harry explained about demanding details of his claiming the head of house Potter be kept secret yet Dumbledore woke them with the news this morning, how is that possible?

Ragnok looked pensive for a moment before asking, "are you aware that the headmaster is a master legitimist?" Harry and Hermione held up their hands wearing the betrothal rings, which surprised the goblin though he clearly knew what they were. "My congratulations my Lord and Lady, wearing those rings and still being together means you were meant to be. It also means that your thoughts would have been unreadable. Very few goblins knew of your change in status so rest

assured we will find them, and quickly.”

Harry nodded in agreement before continuing, “as you can imagine I do not want to conduct any family business until this problem has been resolved, but there is another matter of which I will deal only with you.” Ragnok nodded and the other two goblins left the room before he placed privacy charms around them.

“I would like the contents that were placed in vault 97 with the codename ‘pureblood supremacy’ brought to your office.” Ragnok nearly fell off his chair in shock before reaching for a piece of parchment and writing instructions on it. Five minutes later there were twelve ornate chests, about the size of a small loaf of bread, sitting on Ragnok’s very large desk.

Remus noted the coats of arms on the chests and recognised some of them, Malfoy, McNair, Lestrangle and others. All were wealthy supporters of Lord Voldemort.

Harry stood and approached the first chest gave the password in parseltongue; the chest opened revealing a Gringotts vault key. Harry took the key and placed it on the desk, in front of the appropriate chest, before proceeding to the next one. In short order there were twelve keys aligned along the desk.

“I have complied with all the security arrangements requested by these accounts therefore I have unlimited access to them as per the agreement, is that correct?” asked Harry

Ragnok couldn’t speak, with the keys on the desk and the Potter account this young man now held sway over more than half the gold in Gringotts, and some goblin had upset him! Finding the traitor was the number one priority of Gringotts bank; otherwise there might not be a bank. Noticing that Lord Potter was waiting for an answer he could only nod in agreement that security had been followed to the letter.

I want everything removed from these vaults except one Knut, it has to sit in the centre of the vault along with a piece of parchment I will

give you.” Hermione immediately began writing twelve messages on pieces of parchment Ragnok supplied. “I want everything placed in the biggest vault you have and whether it, and the Potter account, stays here will depend on the secrecy surrounding these transactions. The first time these account holders find out about this is when they access their vaults and under no circumstances is anyone to find out who or how it was done.”

A relieved Ragnok could see a glaring hole in his plan, “Lord Potter, forgive me if I overstep the mark but it will be front page in tomorrow’s Prophet that you were here today and the smarter ones will draw their own conclusions. I would not wish the bank to be punished for this.”

Harry and Hermione just smiled, “by removing their wealth it means they will have to come after us themselves, we will take care of the rest. We are going to have a meal, can I assume that I will be able to discuss my family accounts without fear of it becoming public knowledge when we return?”

“An investigation has already begun and I will be handling all of your accounts personally from now on.” Ragnok replied, as this customer was effectively the richest wizard in the world.

Harry gave a slight bow before they were graciously escorted from the bank, anyone who had seen Dumbledore’s rather abrupt exit at the point of a goblin sword couldn’t fail to notice the difference in the goblin treatment of the boy-who-lived.

Remus was worried that Albus would be hanging about outside waiting on them but there was no sign of the old meddler, apparently he’d had his fill of public humiliation for now and would be awaiting a more discreet opportunity. Remus couldn’t wait any longer and had to ask, “just what in Merlin’s name was that all about?”

Hermione jumped in, for all her changes she still loved explaining things, “all those purebloods gave Voldemort a key to their vaults, he set-up what he thought was unbreakable security, password to the vault then individual passwords on each chest in parseltongue. It was foolproof except Harry has the knowledge and the ability to speak parseltongue. We have dealt a massive blow to his finances and his

supporters today.” She looked so cute sharing knowledge that Harry just had to kiss her.

Harry was sitting in the most expensive restaurant in Diagon Alley and he was a lot more nervous about this confrontation than any of the others he had faced today, his whole future depended on this. Remus entered smiling, followed by Hermione and a woman who couldn't be anyone else but her mother. Emma was supposedly whispering to Hermione but they could all clearly hear her, “Hermione when you phoned and said there was someone that it was imperative we meet, I should have known it would be one of your professors.”

Hermione had a beaming smile as Harry stood up to greet them, “Mum, Dad, I would like to introduce you to my betrothed and future husband, Lord Harry James Potter.”

Please Review

Chapter 5

Only the fact that Hermione had never pulled a prank on her parents stopped them from bursting out laughing when being introduced to their fourteen year old daughter's future husband, that combined with the seriousness that both were treating the situation set alarm bells ringing in the minds of the senior Grangers.

Harry kissed the back of Emma Granger's hand before showing her to a seat, shook Dan Granger's hand before kissing Hermione on the cheek and holding the chair for her.

As soon as they were all seated a waiter brought a selection of starters and two bottles of wine that raised Dan's eyebrows all the way to his hairline.

"I apologise for not giving you a choice of menu and wine but the waiter suggested platters of food and wine from my private cellar here, apparently my family were frequent visitors in times past. Please fill your glasses as we have quite a story to tell and you will probably need a drink before we're finished."

Dan filled glasses for himself, Emma and Remus while Harry and Hermione stuck to fruit juice. They were all picking at the starters but new the main course would be the tale they were about to hear.

"You are going to here a story that is hard to believe but never the less true, please can you hold questions until we finish it then we will answer everyone the best we can. Both Hermione and I value truth above all else since we have been lied to for years so I promise we will tell the truth as we know it." Harry stopped and removed a notebook and pen from his robes and gave it to Emma, she just smiled and held the pen poised to take note of her first question.

"Yesterday a sixteen-year-old Hermione Granger followed her boyfriend of about a year, a fifteen-year-old Harry Potter and our two best friends, Neville and Luna, to the ministry of magic and straight into a death eater trap. We were fighting for our lives when Hermione was hit with a curse that ended hers." Hermione held his hand and rested her head on his shoulder.

“When Hermione fell I went crazy, I killed every death eater in the building, and there was about a dozen of them, then I faced Voldemort and defeated him. Unfortunately my magic got away from me and destroyed the ministry building and everyone in it. Hermione and I were dead and got to meet my parents, we were offered the chance to come back and make a difference but I will be honest with you, we nearly chose not to.” This brought shocked gasps from the three adults at the table, how could anyone choose not to come back?

“I was with my parents and had the girl I love with me, that fulfilled my greatest wishes until Hermione gave me a reason to come back, our future children. The betrothal rings we wear are special and Hermione now has all my memories and I have hers, we know everything there is to know about each other and still love each other more than life itself. The waiter is hovering so lets get the next course and have some time to digest the information before we answer your questions.”

The waiter again brought platters of food for them to chew over while they tried to swallow the story Harry had told. The food was superb, the wine was excellent and the story was unbelievable.

Hermione looked at her mother who was onto her third page of notes and questions, “Ok mum, lets have it.”

“What do you intend to change and how will you go about it?” asked Emma.

“We’ve already made massive changes, in the original timeline my godfather had his soul removed by a dementor while Dumbledore let it happen, we saved him and the headmaster is raging.”

Remus was out his seat until Harry’s hand on the professor’s arm calmed him down slightly, but only slightly.

Hermione carried on the answer, looking straight at Remus “when you heard he had been kissed you cursed Dumbledore for allowing it

then left the wizarding world for good, we never got to see you again.” She glanced towards her mother for the next question.

Emma had the expression of someone who was humouring the deranged, while waiting for the medication kicking in, “if you have lived for two more years then you must know what I was planning to do this summer?”

Hermione’s face went bright red while Harry started to chuckle before answering her, “I believe you are referring to giving Hermione the ‘birds and bees’ talk though I must say the diagrams were very informative. This should save us all the embarrassment of having to go through that again and I now totally understand where Hermione gets her obsession with colour coding everything.”

What Harry would never talk about was when Hermione asked her mother how to get a boy, Emma had bared her soul to her daughter about how after she was born Emma had suffered from postnatal depression and couldn’t bare to be touched by Dan. This had gradually worn off over a long period of time but neither of them were comfortable making the first move, by this time they were sleeping in single beds and had drifted into the platonic roles of friends, colleagues, business partners and parents.

“You said that you have been lied to for years, who by?” asked a blushing Emma.

“I would have to say everyone apart from the lovely lady by my side, Remus at least only lied by omission, but everyone else wanted to have a piece of the boy-who-lived. By far the worse perpetrators were Dumbledore and the Weasleys.”

The Grangers appeared perplexed until Hermione explained, “in our world Harry is famous for surviving the killing curse and banishing Voldemort, though he’s not dead as everyone hoped. Harry is also incredibly wealthy, something we just found out and it makes no difference to us.” Dan Granger had sat quietly, content to let his wife discover just what the hell Hermione was playing at but he couldn’t let the last comment pass him by.

“Hermione how can you possibly say that wealth wont make a difference? Your fourteen and I can see how all this might impress you but I’m really starting to get angry here, if you wanted a boyfriend we wouldn’t have objected but this cock and bull story has got to stop.”

“Dad the rings we wear means that there can be no secrets or lies between us, Harry knows what I’m thinking and vice-versa, he has already added my name onto the Potter account and knew I was unhappy about it but pointed out that when we married it would be ours anyway. As to the story please ask Harry any question you want about anything that I would know, I’ll even go and powder my nose so I can’t be accused of helping him.” Hermione and her mum headed for the ladies while Dan tried to think of something that there was no way Hermione would tell this young man.

Emma wanted to talk to her daughter alone and they had barely entered the rest room when Hermione’s face was once again bright red, “I can’t believe he asked him that” Emma heard her whisper. Her enquiring look told her more than she was prepared for. “Dad just asked Harry what was my favourite type of knickers when I was four, remember when I wouldn’t wear anything else, I had forgotten about my Paddington Bear pants”

Emma didn’t need a pad to write down the questions that were coming to her brain thick and fast, “how could you possibly know that? Does Harry know the answer and just how far have you gone with this relationship in whatever time you care to talk about?”

Hermione’s rye smile had her mother really worried, “relax mom, Harry’s answering every question dad’s asked, including about my pet tortoise that next doors dog tried to eat. We were waiting until we were married before sleeping with each other though we were going to elope to Gretna as soon as Harry turned sixteen. We couldn’t tell you as all our mail was being intercepted, we spent the last year just keeping our heads down and training very hard. Harry really was serious when he said we nearly didn’t come back, shitty doesn’t even begin to describe Harry’s life, and it was touch and go for a while but his parents were delighted with the choice we made. You would love them mum, you’ll love Harry, even with all the crap he’s had in his live

Harry is the kindest, most gentle, loving person you will ever meet and with a set of moral and ethical values that are forged in steel. I saw his memory of what he did when I was killed, Harry didn't want to survive and only the fact that he wanted the people who had murdered me to pay kept him going. They didn't stand a chance; my Harry went through the cruellest, toughest fighters the opposition had to offer as if they were nothing. When he died killing Voldemort his main emotion was relief that he wouldn't have to live without me, have you any idea what it feels like to share a love that strong?"

Hermione knew she'd said the wrong thing as her mother burst into tears, she wasn't used to seeing emotions coming from her parents so did the only thing she could think off, she pulled her mother into a hug.

Emma's whole body went ridged with the unaccustomed contact before wrapping her arms around her daughter and really let her emotions go, the thought that her daughter could feel so unloved that she would even consider not coming back was eating away at Emma's insides. For a mother to hear that her child would choose death rather than the life she was leading was the final nail in her emotional coffin. She knew that she was a miserable failure as a wife but now this apparently extended to being a mother as well, her life seemed pretty hollow when her only accomplishment was being a good dentist. She sobbed so hard that it took a couple of minutes before realising that Hermione was talking to her.

"Mum, its ok, the reason Harry and I came back is to change things. Never doubt that I love you and dad but Harry is my future, my life."

Emma was washing her face when Hermione gasped, "we need to get back in there, dad's getting pissed at Harry answering all his questions and is starting to make stuff up, he just asked Harry about my former boyfriends."

"What former boyfriends?" asked her mother.

"Exactly! Dad has no idea what he's dealing with. Harry's just laughing at the moment which isn't going down to well with dad."

Dan Granger was getting frustrated at this smart arsed kid in front of him who knew more about his daughter than he did, he almost jumped out his chair when two hands landed on his shoulders, one belonging to his daughter and even more surprising one belonged to his wife. Both acted in unison by squeezing his shoulder and saying "relax" but what really got his attention was the evidence that his wife had been crying.

Hermione sat on Harry's lap and gave him a gentle kiss, "and you behave yourself!"

Harry pretended to be hurt, "aw Hermione, I didn't even call him 'Fozzie Bear' and I know he hated when you called him that when you were younger." The expressions on the senior Grangers left them wishing for a camera, it was a sweet moment as the waiter cleared the table and brought dessert.

Emma was eating the most delicious cheesecake she had ever tasted so it was left to Dan to ask the question, "So, what happens next?"

"We go to Gringotts and find out what the manipulator has been up to, I'm hoping there will be a property that's liveable where we can spend the weekend getting to know each other again, sorry with all Hermione's memories I know you as well as she does but even that's changed. This fourteen-year-old Hermione is not the same girl, she's lived another two years and they were hard years. So we really all need some time to get to know one another again and do it somewhere Dumbledore doesn't have the address of."

Hermione added, "Professor you are included in this as well, we need to work out how to get Sirius a fair trial and then both of you can stay with us. James and Lily spoke very highly of you and that recommendation, along with our own experience of you this year, means we definitely want you to be part of our lives."

The three adults agreed they would all go to Gringotts and make a decision after that. Dan was pleased that Harry was giving them an opportunity to get to know the boy who had captured his daughter's heart, Remus was just pleased to be included.

Harry sensed the danger the instant they entered Gringotts, the hairs on the back of his neck were standing up and screaming 'look-out', trouble was coming and it's arrival was imminent. "Remus, protect mum and dad" the words had barely passed Harry's lips when a goblin lunged at them with a sword.

His intended target appeared to be Emma and, while the goblin was quick, Harry was lightning. He grabbed the goblin's sword wielding wrist before bringing his knee into contact with its elbow, while Harry had retained all his abilities that were honed through hour upon hour of practice, his younger body didn't possess the strength and muscle of his former self. Though the goblin screamed in pain, his elbow was unbroken and he still held onto the sword, fortunately Hermione's sensible shoes made short work of the goblin's left kneecap and Harry was able to hit the arm again, breaking it this time and causing the sword to clatter onto the floor, landing right next to Dan who immediately snatched the weapon.

Dan Granger was standing in the middle of a bank, one arm around his trembling wife while his other held the goblin blade ready to fight anyone or anything that dared attack his family. His rational mind was telling him he wouldn't last thirty seconds against a trained goblin warrior but that side of his brain was being swamped by an adrenalin fuelled primitive who was ready to kill every goblin in the bank. His fight or flight response was off the scale and Dan Granger wasn't for running.

Emma was clinging onto Dan for dear life, she was wrapped round his torso while his left arm tried to pull her even closer, her mind was racing but her body wouldn't respond to its commands. The scene had almost seemed to be in slow motion as she watched the creature attack her with a sword, even in slow motion Harry's reactions were a blur as he somehow managed to grab the goblin and deflect his thrust away from her. Hermione and Harry were in perfect synchronisation as they dispatched the bad guy and spun round ready for the next attack.

Remus felt like the proverbial 'spare prick' at a wedding, as he stood there impotently, unable to use his wand. He was just about to call to

the dynamic duo and inform them that drawing your wand in Gringotts was a death sentence when a group of six goblins attacked, only to be torn apart by devastating spell work. Shit, they were in real trouble now.

They saw the goblins rush them and Harry mentally flashed 'shoulders and hips' to Hermione before the two teens wandlessly fired reductors dropping the six goblins on the floor, they weren't dead but they certainly weren't attacking anymore either. Their aim was deadly and there were at least two freshly detached goblin limbs lying amongst the carnage. Goblins were flooding into the main floor of the bank before Zutekin screamed, "STOP!" and slowly approached the group with his hands held out showing he carried no weapon. When he was only a couple of paces away, he stopped and got to his knees with his head bent forward as if awaiting the executioners blade.

"My Lord, I guaranteed your safety while inside this bank and I have failed, my worthless life is yours to do with as you please"

"Could you please tell me what the hell is going on? I may be mistaken but isn't it rather bad for business to attack customers in the main floor of the bank?" Asked Harry calmly.

Ragnok entered and drew gasps from the assembled goblins as he bowed to the young wizard, "Lord Potter, it would appear matters we discussed earlier today came to fruition before we were ready and for that, on behalf of Gringotts and the goblin nation, I apologise. Could we please all retire to my office while we clean the garbage off the floor."

They made their way along the corridor with Emma still wrapped round Dan though the sword was now in a scabbard on his hip. When a goblin had asked for the sword Dan had politely but very firmly replied that he was keeping the weapon, he was provided with the scabbard as it was against goblin law to have an unsheathed blade in the presence of their leader. He held his wife tightly, realisation beginning to sink in that he could have lost her.

Hermione watched her parents knowing exactly how they were feeling, after being reunited with Harry after the battle at the ministry she was ready to drag Harry onto one of the couches in that room and ravish him. If Lily and James had appeared even ten minutes later then they would have seen quite a show. They were now sitting in Ragnok's office waiting on an explanation for the attack on their lives that was just attempted and her mother still hadn't released dad.

Ragnok began, "I am awaiting confirmation but it would appear the goblins who attacked you are all of the same family, or clan if that would explain it clearer, they have aligned themselves with one particular wizard against the goblin nation. This treason will cost every member of the clan their life."

Harry and Hermione spoke with one voice, "Dumbledore?" Ragnok's nod of agreement had Hermione thinking.

"Wouldn't it be better to leave some of these traitors alive to testify against Dumbledore?"

"My Lady," answered Ragnok "the word of fifty goblins would not be believed against a wizard in your world, what chance then of goblins being triumphant over the word of Albus Dumbledore?"

"What we need is some undeniable evidence that we can use to cast doubt on his character, we both know that he's a lying manipulative bastard but proving that to the rest of the world will be quite a challenge." Said Harry.

"Ah but remember we don't have to prove it, we just give whatever facts we've got, present them to show Dumbledore in the worse possible light then play the boy-who-lived card. You being the innocent saviour of the wizarding world controlled by the evil headmaster for reasons we don't know. Harry Potter leaving Hogwarts and, more importantly, wizarding Britain will be front page news and citing Dumbledore as the reason behind that decision will turn people against him and sow doubt in his strongest believers," answered Hermione.

“Brilliant and beautiful, how could I possibly resist,” Harry said while kissing his betrothed.

“Excuse me,” said Dan “leaving Britain must have slipped your mind when we were discussing what to do next. We do have a say in this you know.”

Ragnok coughed, “actually Mr Granger, as the betrothed of Lord Potter she is under his protection and, in the magical world at least, he is responsible for her wellbeing and safety.” Dan and Emma were shocked into silence so the goblin continued “we can prove that Dumbledore broke the law by placing you with the Dursleys against the express wishes of your parents will, we can also prove that he has paid himself five thousand galleons a month for your upkeep.”

“You mean to tell me that while my Harry was getting bread and water passed through a cat flap in his door at Privet Prison, that old bastard was pocketing fifty thousand pounds a month to keep his wrinkly old arse covered in those hideous robes he wears. That’s over seven million pounds he’s stole and we want it back- with interest!” raged Hermione

Dan was beginning to get some idea what she meant by ‘incredibly wealthy,’ seven mil was a big number whatever way you looked at it.

Harry made the decision, “I want any charges we are able to bring perused vigorously, all moneys to be recovered and any fines levied, in short we hit the old bastard with every legal option available to us. Meanwhile Hermione and I will attack him publicly, if we can have him fighting on multiple fronts he will have less time to notice us disappearing. Hopefully we can do him some permanent damage but at the very least have people questioning his decisions.”

Remus just sat there in awe of this young couple, he had thought James and Lily complimented each other but these two took that to a whole different level. They were physically still teenagers but he couldn’t help but think this is the couple that his friends would have eventually become. Harry and Hermione both had what was once called ‘old souls’ in that they acted more mature than their years. Hermione’s comment about Privet Prison was not forgotten either but

filed away for when he and Sirius could pay the muggles a visit, preferably at night with a full moon.

Ragnok's features contorted into a scary grin, "Dumbledore hailed himself as 'leader of the light,' but throughout history that title has usually been held by a Potter. The restaurant you had lunch in is normally packed and reservations almost impossible to get, the owner closed when he heard Lord Potter wanted to eat lunch there and talk to his betrothed's family. Your grandfather gave his father the gold to start the business and wouldn't take it back when they were successful, the table you sat at today was last used by your parents on their wedding anniversary before going into hiding, only Potter's and their guests are allowed to use it. This is the kind of dedication Dumbledore can only dream about because the Potter's have been respected in the wizarding world for centuries and, if I may say so, the latest Lord Potter looks well on the way to continuing that tradition. When Lord Potter speaks, the wizarding world will listen and there's nothing that Dumbledore or his lapdog Fudge can do about it, though they will try."

"What we need is a bolt-hole that we can live out of the gaze of Dumbledore and the ministry, somewhere secure but with room to train," said Harry.

Ragnok brought out a folder and at first glance there were three possibilities, none of them perfect but each had their own positives. Potter Manor in Aberdeenshire looked the best but it was still in Britain and closer to Hogwarts than they would like, the ranch in Kansas was a front-runner but the winner was the Château on the Amalfi Coast in Italy for the simple reason that Harry had never seen the sea.

Dan Granger was left cursing Harry's relatives, how the hell could the boy not have seen the sea; we lived on a bloody island for Christ sake.

Ragnok provided them with portkeys to all three choices, Harry and Hermione got wallets that they could withdraw any currency they needed straight from their vaults with a muggle credit card thrown in.

They agreed that Monday would be D-Day, the day that Dumbledore got some payback, Harry called for Dobby as they were unsure of the state of the building they would be portkeying into while Hermione had arms full of ledgers and scrolls, including the Potter will. Harry then held out the portkey and the six left Gringotts for Italy.

They arrived at the Chateau to be greeted by two bowing elves, Brutus and Cindy, who welcomed their Lord and Lady to the cliff top retreat. The building seemed to consist of white walls, marble floors and carved pillars at every turn. The entire party was coming down from an adrenalin induced high and were feeling the strain, Remus had transformed last night and Harry and Hermione hadn't been exactly idle either. Dan Granger had a sword on one hip and a wife on the other, she still had her arms wrapped round him with her head buried in his chest. Harry asked that they be shown to rooms where they could have a nap; freshen up before meeting for supper to discuss their next moves.

Dan and Emma were shown into a lavish room but both teenagers would have bet they didn't care, they never once took their eyes off each other and Harry wandlessly cast a silencing charm on the room before they moved on to the master suite where Hermione immediately kicked her shoes off and lay on the bed, noticed her new robes had some blood on them so off they came as she asked Harry what the silencing charm was all about.

"Eh, your dad looked as if he was about to get very lucky and I for one don't really need to hear that, Hermione what are you doing?"

"I'm getting comfortable in our room, yes Harry OUR room. If you think I could sleep somewhere else then you're very much mistaken." Harry could see Hermione was getting herself set for a good old rant so, like men the world over, he settled down to listen intently and hoped to nod his head in all the right places.

"And another thing Potter, I had my diary all marked out for months, fifty five days we had left until your birthday and our trip to Gretna. Our current situation has just added TWO YEARS to that figure, this is unacceptable! Forget Voldemort, forget Dumbledore, your number one priority is sorting this out. I will not lose you again." With this

Hermione burst into tears and flew into Harry's arms. They lay on the bed and she was asleep in minutes.

Harry managed to untangle himself from the sleeping girl and headed for a writing desk in the corner of the room and put his thoughts onto parchment, he quietly called for Dobby before sending his little friend off on an important errand. Harry lay beside Hermione and soon found himself losing the battle with sleep.

He awoke with a curse almost fired at the stranger who was in their darkened room before realising who it was, "not a good idea to shake Hermione or me awake mum, I nearly stunned you and you know how crabbit Hermione is when just wakened."

A muffled 'I heard that Potter,' came from his love.

"Harry," said Emma "that's the second time you've called me mum, not that I mind too much but would you care to explain what's going on?"

A blushing Harry owned up, "I have all Hermione's memories in my head and she has never called you anything but mum so I really have to concentrate to remember it's Mr and Mrs Granger."

Emma doled out her third hug of the day as she grabbed the still blushing Harry and whispered "thank you for saving my life in more ways than you know." Harry just smiled and returned the hug, he took that to mean that she and Dan had graduated way past hugging in the last few hours, well that and the fact that he was sleeping on the same bed with her daughter and she hadn't even mentioned it.

The fact that they were still wearing clothes probably headed off the bawling out though Harry knew it was only delayed as Hermione fully intended to stay with him from now on, not a conversation he was looking forward to having with the Grangers but neither he or Hermione were going to sneak about pretending to sleep elsewhere. Should be an interesting supper.

After a quick wash and finding cloths laid out for them they headed down to the terrace where a table and candles awaited them,

everyone was blown away with the view as the platform actually extended out over the cliff, providing views of the bay of Naples and the island of Capri.

They sat down to a meal that the elves had prepared and Harry noticed that Dan had a smile on his face that made Ronald McDonald appear glum by comparison. There would never be a good time to bring up the subject of sleeping with his daughter but it wasn't going to get much better than the present so Harry was about to go full steam ahead and damn the torpedoes when Dobbie arrived with a letter.

Hermione actually felt Harry's relief as he read the letter before he confused her by bursting out laughing. The whole table was looking questionably at him so he just decided 'what the hell' and went for it.

"My betrothed and I were all set to get married at Gretna Green on my sixteenth birthday and we both decided to wait until we were married before sleeping together. Due to the fact we travelled back in time our bodies are now two years younger though our minds are still our original age. My betrothed informed me that waiting another two years was not an option she was willing to consider and subtly suggested I get my arse in gear and find a way around this problem, well I think I may have. As the last surviving member of an ancient house I can legally marry at fourteen, which I will be in fifty four days."

Hermione sat on his lap and gave him a kiss that curled his toes before asking, "why were you laughing then?"

Harry clearly didn't want to share the information but knew he had no way to hide it from her, "I also have the right to take more than one wife but Ragnok advised against that as I would also have another set of in-laws and he seems to think that you are more than enough for me to handle."

Hermione looked straight into his eyes before kissing him again.

Remus said, "just goes to show that you don't make it to be leader of the goblin nation by being stupid." Laughter echoed of the cliffs for the first time in many years.

A/N thanks for reading, please review

Chapter 6

The laughter at the table was interrupted by Dan Granger, “sorry if I’m raining on anyone’s parade here, but don’t we get a say in this marriage? Hermione is after all only fourteen and still our daughter, we could simply remove her from Hogwarts.”

Hermione jumped in before Harry could say anything, “when you signed the form that allowed me to attend Hogwarts it wasn’t just a contract with a school, it basically stated your daughter was a witch and would be joining the magical world. For me to be removed from this world would need the agreement of my magical guardian, my parents and myself. When I entered the magical world Albus Dumbledore was my magical guardian, that was totally unacceptable and my betrothal to Lord Potter here remedied that situation. So now Harry is my betrothed and magical guardian and if you think there is any way either of us would agree to your suggestion then your not as smart as I always thought you were.”

“Mr Granger,” Harry continued, “what you have to understand is I’m not some hormonal teenager after your daughters body.”

“Your not?” cried Hermione, feigning shock “Oh Harry darling, I’m going to be so disappointed.”

“Not helping dear.” Harry cautioned.

“Sorry, just couldn’t help myself”

“As I was saying before being rudely interrupted.” Hermione stuck her tongue out at him, “I intend to be with your daughter for the rest of our lives, I watched her die in front of my eyes and that will not happen again.” The passion in his voice combined with the fire contained in his eyes gave credence to the fact that this was no normal almost fourteen-year-old boy.

“We know how precious life is and having been given a second chance at life we intend to live it to the fullest. We will truthfully say that our wedding on the 31st July will be our first time together but we have no intentions of being parted until then. I make no apologies but

we will not sneak about as if we're doing something wrong." Harry felt Hermione's arms go around him as her head rested on his shoulder.

Harry continued, "what I will apologise for is pulling you both into a war that you had no knowledge of and I'm afraid what we tell you is going to be based on your relationship with us."

Dan was starting to lose his temper at being dictated to by this young lad but Emma put her hand on his leg; the shock of this unaccustomed contact was enough to keep him in check for the moment. "Could you explain that last comment please Harry," asked Emma.

Remus was about to leave when Hermione asked him to stay, "Remus, we hope you and Sirius will stay with us, we would like to consider you both family. If things had turned out different you know that you would have been part of Harry's life all these years and there's a lot of catching up to do. We will explain what we can later."

Harry turned to the Grangers, "I have all Hermione's memories so as an outsider looking in I know what the family relationship is, I also know why thanks to two years of memories that you don't have. Mr Granger today in the bank you were in way over your head yet you stood there, sword in hand, ready to kill for your wife and daughter. There was never any doubt in my mind that you love both dearly and I know how Hermione feels about her dad, if I may say so Mrs Granger's feelings were also glaringly obvious." Dan looked at his wife and did something he hadn't done in years; he leaned over and kissed her on the cheek. They were both blushing like teenagers.

"The point I'm trying to make here is that it's not just Hermione and I who have been given a second chance, we all have. As to the relationship with us, we hope it can be a close one where we can come for advice, a much-needed hug or even a kick up the arse if we need it. If you wish to keep it polite, Christmas and Birthdays we will understand but you must also understand that we would have to be careful what we say. I am not being dramatic here as today's events proved, people are either trying to kill or control us and I'm afraid you are both going to get sucked into that."

“After what happened today I don’t think there’s any way we could doubt you about a war going on but I feel we are being asked to make decisions here by a boy we just met today without most of the facts. I hope you understand where my frustration and even anger is coming from, my family is in great danger and I don’t have a clue what’s going on.” Dan was as usual trying to be reasonable but it was getting harder with each passing moment.

Emma had seen the effect that Hermione’s hug had on Harry when he was getting upset so she emulated her daughter and hugged her husband, resting her head on his shoulder. She could feel the tension leaving his body and the contact felt so nice she was almost crying at the thought of what she had denied herself for so many years, she agreed with Harry this was a second chance for them as well.

“We will try and explain it as best we can, there are five factions in this battle, the goblins, Voldemort and his death eaters, Fudge with his ministry lackeys, Dumbledore and his worshipers – especially the Weasleys, with of course Hermione and I slap bang in the middle of it. After today we’re pretty sure the goblins are now on our side, this is a massive boost as the other three have been courting them and with Dumbledore now persona non grata we’re already well ahead of the game.” Harry explained.

Hermione knew what was bothering her dad and tried to explain, “When Harry killed Voldemort in the ministry it was for the forth time,” Hermione started counting them off on her fingers to her astonished parents and Remus, “as a fifteen month old baby, earning him a scar and a nick-name, as an eleven year old when he possessed our defence teacher, as a twelve year old with the complication of having to kill the Basilisk that petrified me and again at the ministry when he had his twelve best death eaters with him and still got his arse whipped. That’s why we’re in the middle; no one else has even hit him with a spell. Harry is like the super weapon that two factions want to control while the third wants it eliminated.”

‘Do you know why Voldemort wants to kill you and, perhaps more important, why he wont stay dead?’ asked a bewildered Remus.

“Yes to both questions Remus, the first will have to stay a secret as only three people know it, the other one being Dumbledore. Had we known the secret there’s a very good chance we wouldn’t have been anywhere near the ministry that night. The other question we will answer after Monday is over lets just say we know how to end it now and will need your help with a few things first. Mr & Mrs Granger I know that I’m putting Hermione in danger but she informed me as soon as we became a couple that we were in this together, she doesn’t do ‘little wife waiting on her big strong man to come home’ was how she put it though I’ll spare her blushes on the exact language. When the Weasleys tried to dose us with love potions...”

The Grangers were only a split second behind Remus in registering their outrage loudly. Dan Granger was livid, the thought that someone would try and slip his daughter drugs for that! His mind was torn between thinking Hermione had made the right choice with this boy in front of him and having visions of how good it would feel to use a certain redheaded boy’s face as a punchbag.

Once they had calmed down Harry told them what had happened in the future, “we caught Ron and Ginny red handed in the great hall but Dumbledore refused to expel them, shit he was probably at least aware of it, so we demanded to be resorted out of Gryffindor and entered Hufflepuff with Neville. Luna’s dad owns a newspaper and the whole incident made the front page, Dumbledore got fired, all four Weasleys got expelled and we kept our heads down and trained like mad for most of the year, you saw some of the results today in the bank.”

“Why didn’t you use stunners? The way you were casting those spells you could have picked which eyeball to hit, and all wandless to!” Remus couldn’t quite hide his admiration.

“We’ve found that since we came back our wandless is a lot easier, my power level took quite a jump and these rings seem to be helping Hermione as well. The bastard that hit her in the ministry had been stunned at least once but they kept reviving them and we learned a hard lesson, when your outnumbered you don’t have the luxury of using stunners, when you put them down they need to stay down and

blasting off a limb will do that every time. When the choice is them lying bleeding or us lying dying then it's a no-brainer."

"Mum and dad, what Harry isn't telling you is that he would only let me stand with him if I could handle it, we worked so hard that even without the rings we knew what the other was going to do, with Neville and Luna we were holding our own against Voldemort's best and had the same tactics that we used in the bank been applied they would have taken a beating. We were firing disabling hexes while they were throwing lethal stuff about like confetti, we learned our lesson well."

Harry tried to finish up, "so we have a psycho megalomaniac who wants me dead, a master manipulator who doesn't want me to have a life and a Muppet of a minister who's terrified the boy-who-lived myth is more popular than him. All of which we had no control over –until today. We used information and talent to legally empty the twelve richest death eater vaults and immediately it's discovered all hell will break loose, these people will be coming after us as in most cases we even have the deeds to their homes. This may sound foolhardy but it's much better to actually fight them than let their wealth be used against us."

Hermione said, "in our first twenty four hours back we have saved Sirius, claimed the Potter inheritance, became betrothed, left Hogwarts, defied Dumbledore, made death eaters destitute and fought a battle in the bank, no wonder I'm knackered. Poor mum and dad must feel they're in an episode of the twilight zone, you do realise that we can't go back to the house or your practise until we get this settled?"

"Do you have any idea of timescale?" Dan asked.

Hermione thought for a moment, "Even if all our plans work out exactly as we hope the best that could be achieved would be Christmas but your options are limitless and money is no problem, you can live any dream you ever had. Death eater's torture, rape and kill for fun, getting their hands on my muggle parents will rank just below killing us. I know how much your practice means to you but it's

not worth your lives, nothings worth that.” Harry was now holding an emotional Hermione; it had been a stressful twenty-four hours.

Harry continued for her, “Our schedule is set until Monday, after that we’re pretty much playing it by ear. Lets all take time to process the information and get to know one another before making decisions. Mr & Mrs Granger I’m really sorry but Hermione is correct, returning to your old life just now would be worse than a death sentence, they would enjoy torturing your wife while making you watch and trying to get information so they could do the same to your daughter. You can’t reason with them and unless we get you some automatic weapons you would be helpless against them.”

Dan was shaking his head in disbelief, “My fourteen-year-old daughter wants to marry a Lord on his fourteenth birthday, a Lord who everyone wants to kill, control or idolise. As a result of this we now find ourselves in the front line of a war we knew nothing about, you may be knackered but I don’t think I’ll be getting any sleep tonight.”

“Way to go mum!” joked Hermione.

It was a blushing Emma Granger who asked, “Hermione, where did this sense of humour come from?”

“Mum we were training every day, before and after classes, and all day at weekends. When your body is so sore you can hardly bear it there are only a few options open to you, quit – no way, crying gets old fast so that just leaves laughing, if you can still laugh you can push yourself just a little bit more.”

The determination in her daughter’s eyes was something she was used to, but combined with the passion she now held it was a potent mix. Emma still hadn’t got over the shock of this afternoon, knowing that someone wants to kill you is bad enough, watching your little girl and her boyfriend totally decimate the attackers in seconds without even breaking sweat was the most terrifying yet wonderful sight she had ever seen. Emma had watched helplessly as there were bodies and limbs flying everywhere with the stench of blood almost making

her vomit, yet the two children were so in tune with each other as they protected the group.

She wasn't used to being helpless and something Harry said was tugging at the back of her mind, "Harry could we get some guns? I never thought I could take a life but watching that today has changed my mind, if anyone wants to come after my family I'll gladly put a bullet in the bastards head!"

Dan and Hermione were looking at Emma as if they just recognised the woman she was, Dan could be right with his earlier prediction, he probably wouldn't get any sleep tonight, he probably wouldn't be complaining about it either.

-oOoOo-

Lucius Malfoy wouldn't be getting much sleep that night either though for a completely different reason, he was standing in a now empty Malfoy family vault reading the note that was left for him, which was proving quite a difficult task as his hands wouldn't stop shaking.

I left something precious in your care yet information has reached me that you let it be destroyed. I have emptied your vault and will put an end to your line at my earliest convenience. I look forward to residing in my new mansion - Disloyalty will be punished. LV

Narcissa Malfoy was not a happy woman, firstly her favourite restaurant had closed at lunchtime then when they finally got admitted for dinner they were told that the bank had refused to honour the payment. Now standing in an empty vault she read the note over her husband's shoulder and shuddered, Narcissa was not a believer in pureblood supremacy only gold and lots of it was important to her. She didn't even care if her next man was a muggle as long as he had the wealth to supply Narcissa Black with the luxury she so obviously deserved.

Narcissa had already mentally moved on from the dead man standing beside her, she had briefly considered saving her son's arrogant arse but the threat to end the Malfoy line handed him a death sentence as well, she didn't want to be caught in the crossfire. There was also the

fact that the gold she had squirreled away over the years would go further with only one using it and she had more chance of snagging her next husband as an unattached widow than with a teenage son in tow. It was looking like Lucius was going to have his hands full so she should have no problems slipping away, Europe was calling.

Lucius was in a quandary, his whole world had just come crashing down around him and he wasn't sure where to turn. He had objects at home that he could sell but as soon as it got out he was in financial difficulties the price he could normally expect would drop like a stone. His so-called friends would be circling like wolves round a wounded animal, he should know, as it was usually him that led the pack. He needed gold fast and South America was looking better by the second, a little gold could go a long way in places like Peru. He knew his wife well enough to know she would be making her own plans; there was never any love but more a mutual respect at just how ruthless the other was. He wondered briefly if she would take the boy and came to the conclusion probably not, he wasn't going to be burdened by the arrogant little tosser either; he could always sire another heir but only if he remained alive, little prince Draco was on his own.

Lucius asked the goblin if they would be willing to purchase some items, the positive reply lifted his spirits for a brief second before he heard the rest. "Unfortunately the market is flooded at the moment and prices are at an all time low" answered the goblin, following his instructions to the letter.

Lucius swore to himself but was left without any other options; he needed to get out the country fast. He had no idea that this was the third time today this scene had played out or that in every case they had come to the exact same conclusion, sell what they can quickly and flee the country. Lucius was also unaware that Harry and Ragnok had made a deal where they bought everything as cheap as possible then to slowly sell the items with all profits set to start an as yet unnamed charity foundation, poor Lucius was getting screwed twice.

Harry and Hermione never dreamed they could be so lucky, eleven of the twelve death eaters would have fled the country by Monday, fear of Voldemort's wrath blocking any other thoughts apart from getting

as far away from Britain as possible. The Dark Lord demanded total loyalty and the idea of confiding in another death eater was usually a one-way ticket to a painful demise. Everyone of them had seen their master dispense death on a whim, when he said you were going to die only one person had ever survived – those were not good odds to gamble your life on.

The only one who didn't flee was Peter Crabbe, he was on his third day of a bender with a quickly diminishing sack of gold before attempting to saunter into Gringotts, stagger would be more accurate, with a 'lady' on each arm. When the goblin cashier told the drunken wizard he had no gold in his vault his 'ladies' disappeared back into the night, fat, ugly, bad breath and body odour could all be overlooked for the right price which he apparently no longer had.

Crabbe was so incensed at losing his ladies that he went for his wand, he was so drunk that he had trouble getting his wand out, so much so that the goblin guard had time to walk over and wait on him eventually pulling his wand before hitting him on the head with the flat of his axe. They had just got the stench of traitor's blood out the bank and he had no wish to start again with this filth. Goblins were not averse to spilling blood but there had to be some honour involved. There was no honour in beheading a drunken wizard; an extended stay in a goblin cell would do him the world of harm.

-oOoOo-

Remus asked for a word with Harry and they walked round the property while Hermione chatted with her parents.

"Harry, why am I here?" asked Remus

He thought for a moment before answering, "we want you to work for us, we need a teacher, a destroyer of dark artefacts but more importantly someone we can trust implicitly, at the moment all we have in that category is Dobby. Neville and Luna will be leaving Hogwarts as well and we're going to need some good teachers, we are also going to have some serious dark objects needing destroyed but mostly someone we can count on if things get tough. The Grangers could go either way at the moment and honestly I can't

blame them, if that was my daughter in there I would probably be going nuts about now."

"Harry I am more than willing to help but I won't accept charity!"

Harry burst out laughing, "Remus you will earn every Knut, we plan on setting the record for OWL's and NEWT's this summer, destroy Voldemort and his most prominent death eaters as well as clearing Sirius Black's name before Christmas. You are going to be involved in that and teaching Nev and Luna, does that sound like charity to you?"

Remus shook his head in disbelief before Harry continued, "if we achieve all our goals you better believe you're in line for a massive Christmas bonus! We can tell you more of our plans once we finally leave Hogwarts on Monday, the chance that Dumbledore or Snape could read your thoughts is just a risk not worth taking as the knowledge isn't needed at this time. Monday we hope to sit down and tell you, Sirius and possibly even the Grangers what we're up to."

"I'll say this for you two, there's no half measures and you better not let your betrothed know you left a certain wedding off that list." Remus answered.

"Oh that list was only the things we'll need your help with, Hermione and I hope we can manage being man and wife by ourselves." This set the both of them laughing.

"Harry when I was wandering I became a muggle bodyguard in the middle east for a few years, I am very good with a gun and know where to lay my hands on suitable weapons for Dan and Emma, both lethal and non lethal." Remus actually looked embarrassed but Harry gripped him by the shoulder.

"That's brilliant and something Hermione and I would like to learn as well, if you can do that tomorrow then we can get our business done on Sunday. I don't want to leave the Grangers here alone so that should work; you can start teaching them as soon as you get the equipment. Please remember money is no object so buy the best

that's available and suitable, I would hate for someone to get injured or worse when a bit more gold could have prevented it."

Remus got the message as they headed back inside; he was working for the Potters now.

-oOoOo-

The big black dog looked round from the bush it was currently lying below to see an elf wearing, in addition to it's tea towel, one sock.

"Sirius Black sir, I am Dobby with a present from the great Harry Potter."

The dog transformed into the gaunt and filthy figure of Sirius Black while Dobby sat a large basket down beside the wizard and disappeared.

Sirius looked in the basket and immediately swiped a chicken leg to munch on while he checked the rest of the contents; a blank piece of parchment intrigued him until he remembered seeing Hermione with a certain map to find the correct window, chuckling as he gave the Marauders password and watched the words appear.

Dear Godfather

The basket contains enough supplies to last for a couple of days, please note the clean clothes and personal hygiene products and take the hint!

Every witch and wizard in the country is looking for you as Fudge just slapped a large price on your head so stay low for now.

On Monday we hope to have them all in a tizzy and that's when you make your move towards the following address:

Potter Manor can be found at One Deeside Lane

Stay here until one of the people you know to trust comes for you.

Be safe

H & HR

Sirius didn't need to sniff his armpit to know he needed a wash but when he read the address his memory of being there in much happier times came flooding back, as he progressed to a meat pie he couldn't help but wonder what his two favourite people had cooked up for Monday.

A/N Please review

Chapter 7

Harry opened his eyes to find the beautiful Italian sunshine being filtered through his even more beautiful betrothed's soft brown hair as she rested her head on his chest while sleeping, what had caused him to wake?

He received his answer in the form of Emma Granger who approached the bed, ran her fingers through her daughter's hair before kissing both of them on the forehead before leaving.

"I don't want to wake up," grumbled Hermione, "this dream is to good, I'm in a beautiful Italian Château, lying in bed with my husband-to-be and my mum just came in and kissed me. This is my best ever dream."

"I think the future Lady Potter needs to create some better memories so we can improve the quality of those dreams," Harry replied, "and just for the record you're not dreaming, I don't want to know what's happening with mum but I hope dad is in the same sort of mood"

"Did Dobby get the package?" Hermione asked.

"Yes, little guy is working his sock off and I don't think I've ever seen him happier. Do you still think this is a good idea love?"

"Harry you know they are very independent people, once it sinks in what they have lost it could get ugly, this has the potential to go wrong but I still think it's a better option than what we would face a few weeks down the line."

"Ok, lets get showered and meet the problem like Gryffindors." He joked.

"Do you want to save water and save time?" she joked back.

Harry was actually embarrassed and their rings told Hermione the reason why, he had put on a lot of muscle and height by the time they

had went to the ministry that fateful night and now he was back to being younger, shorter, skinnier and smaller.

Hermione took the boy she loved so much and kissed him with all the tenderness and love she possessed, “Harry I’m not exactly thrilled to be in my younger body either but it’s still me, this is who we are now and we can’t keep any secrets. I know you still find me attractive so you must know how I feel about you, we can start our training after Monday and at least get our fitness levels back up. Jogging on that beach should be so much more fun than running round a frozen lake in winter.”

Harry held her tight, “sorry love, being in this younger body just brought back some of my old insecurities but we’ll work on it, as much as I love the idea of sharing a shower we don’t need to freak mum and dad out any more than we already have.”

The sound of her daughter giggling brought a smile to Emma’s face as she walked down to breakfast, this Hermione really was a different young girl to the one they had left at King’s Cross Station last September and her mother wholeheartedly approved of the way her daughter glowed with happiness. The fact that this was entirely due to the boy she wanted to marry on his fourteenth birthday couldn’t be denied, she was honest enough to admit that, had the couple been their correct ages, she would be rushing around making wedding arrangements – even if it was only a trip to Gretna Emma would have been happy for them.

Her relationship with her husband had become a physical one for the first time since Hermione’s birth and while both had enjoyed the experiences immensely there was something sorely missing, love! Both had built barriers over the years to protect themselves from the heartache that was their marriage, she supposed that it was understandable that these barriers wouldn’t come crashing down after only one night. At the moment Emma felt as if she was involved in an extra marital affair with a friend and that was not what she wanted, she needed her husband back and couldn’t believe she was going to ask her future son-in-law for help.

There was only four of them sitting down to breakfast as Remus was back in Britain handling Potter business all day, this would give the four a chance to get to know one another.

Emma asked a question that she really needed to know the answer to, "Hermione and Harry, can you tell me what it felt like to share each others memories and why would you do that, wasn't there a danger of you not liking something you seen and it changing the way you felt about each other?"

The raw emotion that both were suddenly displaying made Emma wonder if she had probed to far, Harry's use of mum hinted that she just might have.

"Mum, I have faced a Basilisk, the meanest dragon your ever likely to see and the most evil Dark Lord in the world on more than one occasion but nothing, and I mean nothing scared me as much as waking up and wondering if Hermione still loved me. The others could only kill me but Hermione turning away would destroy me totally, my life before Hogwarts was pretty unpleasant and your daughters love is the one good thing in my life, it defines who I am and I couldn't survive without her."

By the time he was finished speaking his voice was barely above a whisper and only Hermione's arms wrapped around him had granted Harry the strength to finish his answer.

Hermione answered the rest of her mother's question, "I was terrified that Harry would see me for who I really am and not find me worthy of him, we now know that those fears were groundless but they were certainly real enough at the time. The reason for taking this chance was two fold, the second is one of our biggest secrets but we think you deserve to know. Dumbledore and Snape can read minds, it's highly illegal but they do it all the time, while we wear these rings no one can penetrate our minds except each other so our secrets are safe. The second is a bit harder to explain, when Harry died it released something behind the scar that Voldemort gave him and now everything that Voldemort achieved or learned is stored in Harry's head like a vast library containing all the knowledge we need

to destroy him for good. These rings allow me access to that information.”

“Your daughter in research mode is a force to be reckoned with and Voldemort has been called many things but none of them was stupid, evil psychopath – definitely! He was a genius who could have used his power and knowledge for good, becoming a great and respected wizard; instead he wanted to be worshiped using his considerable talents for pure evil. We are working on a plan to take him out with minimal risk but it’s very tricky, there are certain events that we want to happen but if we change too much it could negate our knowledge of the next two years, we are walking a tightrope and after Monday hope to have as little contact with the wizarding world as possible to keep the time line intact.” Harry had his emotions back under control; events that they had put behind them years ago were now fresh in the others mind, leaving the young couple a little frayed around the edges.

Harry continued, “you asked how it felt well the only way to describe it is being there while seeing, hearing and feeling every emotion of every situation, watching Hermione lay in her bed at Hogwarts, crying because I was bloody stupid over a broomstick nearly ripped my heart from my ribcage, watching as she fell in love with me was better than anything I’ve ever felt before. The reason I keep slipping into mum and dad is I know you as well as Hermione does and she never calls you anything else.”

“So this Voldemort can be killed, for good?” asked Dan.

“Yes, he’s not immortal, he just wants to be.” Hermione answered “why are you so interested in the rings mum?”

Well here goes nothing thought Emma, “I would like something similar for your father and I.”

Dan almost choked on his food and it took a minute for silence to descend on the breakfast table before Emma could continue.

“Harry your going to be family so this effects you as well, for more years than I care to remember your father and I have danced around each other, both afraid of saying the wrong thing so nothing of consequence got said. We became polite strangers in our own home and I can now see how our behaviour was harming our daughter as well, I have never seen Hermione happier and it's all down to what she shares with Harry. I want that with the man I've been in love with all these years but lacked the courage to tell him, we've spent so many years behind barriers of our own creation that I've almost forgotten who I really am. There were so many opportunities where the right words or a gentle touch could have changed everything but we let them all pass, too afraid it could all go wrong. The ability to know when the other needs a comforting word, a hug or just dragged off to bed is intoxicating and terrifying but I'm ready to face my fears. I realise that the flip side could end in divorce if we can't stand one another but Dan Granger is the most honest, decent human being I have ever met and I'm prepared to take that chance, a second chance at life.”

Dan Granger looked at the shy, beautiful woman who had made him so happy when she said yes all those years ago. Dan had never even dated another woman as he was painfully shy himself, being partnered with Emma for a lab project at university had ignited the first spark between the couple and had grown until they were married straight out of dental school with Hermione following on just over a year later. The pregnancy and birth had been very difficult with Emma experiencing a lot of pain and afterwards their shy personalities began to emerge, with the old rule 'if you don't give affection you can't be hurt' making a re-appearance in their lives.

Dan was now ashamed to say this had also applied in some degree to his relationship with Hermione as well. The last 24 hours had been the weirdest, scariest but most exhilarating of his life and released emotions he didn't know he possessed. He silently nodded to his wife, agreeing with everything she said, they couldn't go back to the way they were and if she was willing to take a chance on him, he could do no less for the only woman he had ever loved.

Hermione was ecstatic, the thought of mum and dad experiencing what she shared with Harry would make them a lot happier, they

would also realise why they couldn't bear to be apart. "We will contact Ragnok to see if this is even possible but if it is we'll get whatever it takes."

Hermione immediately began writing a note for Dobby to deliver while Harry was left to proceed with the business in hand, he handed both parents thick envelopes and let them be opened before offering an explanation, both were amazed when false British passports, drivers licences, credit cards and thousands of Euros were found inside.

"We realised that through no fault of your own the Grangers have basically become fugitives, these documents are our attempt at giving you back the freedom we all crave so much. This will allow you to travel anywhere in the world you wish for whatever reason, we hope you'll stay with us but this gives you the means to have a weekend shopping trip to New York or a romantic few days in Paris. There's even the option to tour the world and return when this is all over, just please avoid Britain until it is. We know how much we're asking you to give up and this is our attempt to readdress the balance. Anything you need from home can be brought here and we are only to glad to help in any way we can."

Dan looked at the documents to see Daniel Gardiner staring back at him, he was frightened to ask what the limit was on the credit card, somehow he thought their wouldn't be one. He could see both teens watching for their reaction, probably worried that he would think they were being 'bought off' so Dan decided he better say something, "Can we hire a car? I've never been to this part of Italy before and would like to do some sightseeing."

"Remus and I spotted a garage last night, why don't you take a look in there first. Please help yourself to anything you see there, treat this house and everything in it as you would your own, we are going to be family after all, " a grinning Harry answered.

-oOoOo-

Severus Snape was having a good day, Potter hadn't shown up for detention last night and he was on his way to the Headmasters office

to demand the little shit be expelled. The sight of Potter walking away from Hogwarts with his head down and dragging a trunk had fuelled many of the potion masters less bloody dreams for the past few years. Harry also featured heavily in the blood filled versions as well but Snape was going to be magnanimous and settle for whatever he could get. Upon entering the office an unusual sight awaited him, Albus had both hands covering his face as if trying to deny the existence of the newspaper currently on his desk. Severus just had to read it.

Bloodbath at Bank

Astonishing events at Gringotts bank yesterday sent shockwaves throughout the wizarding world and the repercussions have yet to be realised.

A pack of heavily armed goblins charged a small group of customers and were not only defeated, they were decimated. A goblin who had a knee and elbow shattered was the least injured casualty, another six all had limbs blown clean off leaving the main floor of Gringotts drenched in goblin blood. The carnage only ended when the leader of the goblins appeared and bowed to the wizard and witch responsible for the devastation, who were the people involved I hear you ask? None other than Lord Harry Potter and his newly betrothed, Hermione Granger.

They had just entered the bank, accompanied by a Hogwarts professor and Miss Granger's muggle parents, when the dastardly deed occurred. According to eyewitness accounts the two teenagers disarmed the first goblin without the use of magic then blasted six goblins to the ground without using their wands. Everyone who witnessed it confirmed this incredible display as an accurate account.

Perhaps even more sinister was an earlier altercation involving the self same teens and their Headmaster again on the main floor of the bank where the boy-who-lived hurled accusations at the old wizard before having his wand inches from Dumbledore's face when he made to grab Lord Potter's betrothed, apparently to return her to school even though she had parental permission and in the company of her lord. The altercation ended when goblins intervened and

Dumbledore was escorted from the bank at the point of a sword while Lord Potter's party was invited into the manager's office.

Whispers coming out of Hogwarts are suggesting that Lord Potter is less than happy with the school and the relationship between the boy-who-lived and the self-styled leader of the light must have fractured beyond repair when only goblins stood between them and a fight that would have the whole wizarding world clamouring for tickets.

This reporter was astonished that, when asked as usual, the goblins actually gave a statement for the first time in living memory.

‘We think both of today's incidents were linked and a wizard is under investigation for banking irregularities and illegal involvement in goblin affairs’

When asked the identity of this wizard all that was forthcoming was confirmation that Lord Potter was definitely NOT under investigation.

Neither Albus Dumbledore nor Lord Potter were available for comment but this is one story that's not going to fade away, goblin blood has been spilled in Gringotts and their investigation will be painstaking and meticulous.

Snape threw the paper away in disgust, “what the hell is going on? First Black escapes from a locked room and our occlumency can't read the brats at all, then he tells the whole school about Tom Riddle. Now instead of being alone and defeated he's betrothed, has the wolf and mudblood's parents along as well; you know it's only a matter of time before the mutt hooks up with him to. He's supposed to be getting ready for the Weasley bitch to ensnare him so he can be mercilessly dumped when the plan needs him broken. Just what did happen at the bank?”

“Potter would appear to have acquired knowledge that could seriously compromise us.” Albus still had his face in his hands.

“US?” Snape said dangerously, “don't you mean compromising to you, I never wanted him here in the first place. He should have been

left with the muggles without discovering the magical world and the Dark Lord would have killed him as soon as he returned but no, you always have to enact some clever plan that Potter always survives. We can't kill Tom until he's fulfilled the prophecy and murdered the annoying little shit, after all that's why we told Tom about the prophecy in the first place."

Albus glared at his professor, "Everyone knew when he was due to attend Hogwarts, I had no choice in the matter but thought getting him close to that useless, lazy Weasley would have held him back, we couldn't even kill the mudblood trapping her in a toilet with a mountain troll. Then my own bloody phoenix goes and saves his blasted life from that basilisk, and refuses to take us down there to harvest it. He carries an amazing amount of luck and inspires loyalty in nearly everyone he meets, no wonder Fudge is terrified of the boys popularity."

"He's an arrogant prat that I'm going to enjoy taking down a peg when he turns up, wandless magic my arse, they just don't want to prosecute the boy-who-lived." With that Snape stormed out the office and Albus returned his head to his hands, looking for inspiration.

-oOoOo-

Cornelius Fudge was delighted with today's story in the Prophet, it took the populations minds of the fact that they had Sirius Black in custody and he escaped again. The fact that two wizards who were more popular than him appeared to be at each other's throats was manna from heaven, if both ever joined forces Fudge knew whom the public would support. Maybe it was time to make overtures towards the boy-who-lived, he was after all, looking for a new mentor.

He would ask Lucius about it the next time he saw him, Fudge was actually surprised that he had not had a visit from the blond Slytherin before this, he wondered where he was.

-oOoOo-

Remus was sitting having tea in Longbottom Manor and secretly thanking Harry for the new robes, his old ones would have made him

stand out like a sore thumb. He knew fine well it wasn't the robes that got him sitting here chatting with the Longbottom matriarch, the name Potter opened doors.

"Neville has of course mentioned Harry but I never realised they were close," said Augusta.

"Harry counts Neville as his best friend and that's why I'm here, there will be story's appearing in the Quibbler on Monday that are totally accurate, they're very friendly with the owner's daughter and Harry will be writing the piece along with his betrothed. The outcome is that both will be leaving Hogwarts and want to take their friends with them, private tutors will be used and the four will probably end up sitting their exams early. Both Harry and Hermione are convinced that Neville will be a great wizard but there are things going on at the castle that hold students back."

Remus could see the elderly woman reeling from the shocks he was firing at her, Neville was Harry Potter's best friend and a great wizard who Hogwarts was holding back was quite a lot to take in. Remus couldn't recall the boy speaking in class unless asked a direct question.

"Do you really think my Neville is being held back?"

Remus answered as truthfully as he could, "your grandson is brilliant at herbology and if he was the same at potions the world would be his oyster, unfortunately his boggart is professor Snape, the potions teacher. He bullies Neville mercilessly and the only break he gets is when the man picks on Harry. Neville is a powerful wizard who's biggest problem is his lack of confidence, working with Harry, Hermione and Luna will solve that and you should see an improvement very quickly."

Augusta had heard enough, the houses of Longbottom and Potter had been aligned for centuries and the thought of her grandson carrying on that tradition and becoming a better wizard in the process was a pretty powerful argument, she signed the piece of parchment that Remus had brought from Lord Potter.

-oOoOo-

Dan Granger was sitting at an outdoor café looking out on the Mediterranean Sea, cappuccino in hand, beautiful woman by his side and a red Ferrari Daytona convertible parked at the kerb. Part of him felt he needed something stronger but then he wouldn't get to drive that wonderful car. Harry's comment about a garage had set them off for a look and what they found had again emphasised the casual wealth of the young man.

Hermione had told them last night that Harry thought his trust vault was all the gold he had and money meant very little to him, having never had any before. He'd already arranged unrestricted access to all Potter vaults for Hermione and named her as his next of kin.

His garage had five classic sports cars that left Dan rooted to the spot, his decision was made when Emma sat in the passenger seat of the Ferrari parked beside them.

How could one person change your life so much in such an incredibly short time? This was the question playing over and over in Dan's mind, well it was easier than trying to answer the one that frightened the life out of him, what to do about Hermione?

What do you do when your fourteen-year-old daughter, who's also a witch, has just time travelled back from the future, where she was dead, and now wants to marry her millionaire lord wizard on his fourteenth birthday!

Dr Benjamin Spock never prepared them for that, shit Spock on Star Trek couldn't solve that one, Dan would have to sort this out using his own logic. They say when your child gets married you don't lose a daughter but gain a son, Dan had the feeling in this case it was an either / or scenario. If it came down to choice Hermione would choose Harry every time over her parents.

There were no doubts that the kids loved each other and that whole being in each others heads meant they knew each other better than any couple ever could. The magical war thing sent chills down his

spine but his daughter standing beside the man she loved, sharing his trials and tribulations made him prouder than he had ever been. Watching the two of them in action at the bank had been breathtaking.

Harry was hardly a new concept to them having been reading about him from Hermione's letters and he was all she talked about during the holidays. They had been prepared for her boyfriend to be one of two boys and, considering the behaviour of the other one, Dan was certain she had made the right choice. He liked what he'd seen of Harry so far and he certainly had the means to take care of Hermione, that last thought caused a chuckle that Emma responded to.

"Have you made your mind up yet?"

Dan was still chuckling, "not quite but you seem to have, care to share?"

"Apart from the age issue I'm delighted for them, it's apparently legal in their culture so my intention is to sit down with Hermione and chat about the contraception options available to her, I don't want to become a grandmother just yet. We raised our daughter to be independent, responsible and to think for herself, we can't really complain with the result. Harry is a fine young man who makes her very happy so I choose to believe that they are nearly sixteen and seventeen, thus solving the only problem I had with the marriage."

Dan was again reminded where Hermione got her intelligence, and beauty from, she had summed everything up neatly, accept the ages they were before travelling back in time and his problem was solved. That shouldn't be too difficult since both acted with a maturity well beyond their biological years. He leaned over and kissed the wonderful woman by his side and noticed some jealous looks from the local males, yes Dan Granger was a lucky man he thought.

-oOoOo-

Harry and Hermione had spent most of the day working on the articles they hoped to get printed on Monday. One attacked Dumbledore, his illegal actions concerning Harry and the safety of

Hogwarts, trolls, three-headed dogs and basilisks. It also highlighted employing a defence teacher possessed by Voldemort while hiding a magical object the Dark Lord was known to be hunting in a school full of children. They also hammered home the point that his first two defence teachers had tried to kill Harry and Dumbledore had appointed both.

Dumbledore thought he was being clever by transferring money out of Harry's vault into a muggle bank but three days later the same muggle bank account transferred the exact same amount into a Gringotts account under his control, until the goblins froze it that is. When this was combined with blocking the Potter will and his illegal placement with the Dursleys it should do considerable damage to the leader of the light. While not expecting him to do time in Azkaban, he was too slippery for that, they were hoping to strip him of as much of his power base as possible.

Snape was also exposed as a death eater who was instrumental in having Harry's parents murdered, they had discussed mentioning the prophecy instead just reporting eavesdropping on a private conversation while spying for his master.

The other article attacked the ministry and was a calculated gamble, fighting on so many fronts would be foolish but their plan was to toss in these articles like hand grenades then retreat back to Italy and hope the in-fighting would do them some good.

They intended to keep their heads down and train; Voldemort was their main target.

Harry and Hermione were walking around outside, trying to get the lay of the land when Dobby appeared beside them with a package from Ragnok.

Harry knelt down in front of his little friend, "Dobby, you're amazing!" they had just discovered elves could blush, "can we get you something to replace that tea towel? This would not be clothes but a uniform for you to wear."

It was a nervous elf who replied, "Dobby would like a uniform but could it please have at least one pocket, Dobby has never had a pocket and always wanted one."

Hermione knelt as well, "of course, we'll get you pockets, would you like any special colour?"

The little elf had a glazed look in his eyes before replying, "lots" and popping away.

-oOoOo-

Remus was back in time for dinner reporting success in all ventures before heading off to bed directly after eating, leaving the four once again at the table.

Hermione spoke, "I know you want to experience the same as us but the best that we can find is a pair of bangles that will let you feel the others emotions, because you're not magical it's so much more difficult to accomplish what you want. Harry and I had an idea of pushing our magic into them which we hope would power the bracelets long enough to do what you require before they revert back to normal."

Harry cautioned, "this has never been tried before so there are no guarantees but we wouldn't even suggest it if we didn't think it was safe. They final choice has to be yours though."

Dan and Emma had discussed many things today, Hermione and Harry, closing their practice, Hermione and Harry, securing the family home and Hermione and Harry, they had both avoided this subject since breakfast but it couldn't be deferred any longer.

"Do it!" said Dan, looking lovingly into his wife's eyes.

Harry held a bracelet in his clasped hands, letting his magic flow into the object. He then gave it to Dan to place on his wife's wrist while Hermione charged the other, giving it to her mum for placing on Dan. A magical pulse jumped between the bracelets and both muggles jolted upright, eyes wide open as the connection established.

Emma was very frightened as she felt the other presence in her head, once she realised it was her husband she relaxed and was overcome with the bliss of sharing something so intimate, so pure – she knew immediately her fears were unfounded – this man loved her with everything that he was.

Dan was looking at the teens with tears in his eyes, “this is what you have? This is what you share?” their nods of confirmation just increased the rate of his tears, “this is worth more than cars, houses, all the gold in that bank of yours, this is priceless!”

His daughter smiled and held both her parents hands, “we know, do you understand now why we couldn’t be parted, it would be cruelty beyond measure.”

Both Grangers had no words available and just nodded, Harry and Hermione had to help them to their bedroom, as both were unsteady on their feet.

Harry’s awakening was a carbon copy of the day before, except that Emma sat on the edge of the bed after kissing them.

“Are we to assume that it worked then?” asked a smiling Hermione.

“We recounted and relived everything from our first meeting until the bank yesterday, and now your father may be the only man in the world to have truly experienced pregnancy and childbirth. It was eye opening to see how stupid we both were and there really was no hiding place thanks to these bangles. We can still feel each other’s emotions and it’s like carrying around a piece of the person you love, words just can’t describe how wonderful it feels. We now understand and totally support your marriage in July, just please no grandchildren for a few years yet.” Emma again kissed the now blushing teens and left them both wondering if it was all a dream.

-oOoOo-

Xenophilius Lovegood was wearing his reporter head today and wanted verification on most of the allegations contained in the articles, it was one thing to claim a mythical creature existed but another to attack the most powerful wizard alive AND the ministry at the same time. Harry and Hermione had come prepared.

The goblins had provided them with all the documents regarding Dumbledore's illegal activities and pensive memories of fluffy, Quirrell's demise, the chamber and the shrieking shack were all the confirmation he needed.

He refused to accept payment for sending copies to all the students in three of the four houses of Hogwarts, all the professors except two and all departmental heads in the ministry saying, "this story will mean I will sell every copy that I print."

His mood darkened at the memory of his daughter limping along the corridor because some bullies had hidden her shoes but he was laughing while watching them get their comeuppance in the great hall at the hands of these two teens. The vision of Snape not only condoning Malfoy's behaviour but also punishing Harry into the bargain had the now angry editor reaching for a quill to sign the parchment allowing Luna to leave Hogwarts.

Harry and Hermione were exhausted by the time they got home, who knew sitting in meetings all day could be so tiring. Now all they had to do tomorrow was go to Hogwarts, confront Dumbledore, make sure Snape and Malfoy kept their unknown appointment with Poppy Pomfrey and leave for good, taking Luna and Neville with them. What could possibly go wrong?

-oOoOo-

Neville, Luna and Sirius all got a visit from one of the strangest things any of the purebloods had ever seen, an ecstatic Dobby was dressed in what could loosely be described as camouflage military combat fatigues that had pockets everywhere, including one on his jacket that had his name stencilled across it. Harry had given his little friend a few gold coins to buy stuff to put in his new pockets. The little guy seemed to have everything in there but the kitchen sink, though the

fact he may have one hidden away with a shrinking charm on it could not be discounted.

Neville and Luna were both given advanced copies of tomorrow's Quibbler and a copy of their 'get out of Hogwarts free' permission slip. Both would be early for breakfast tomorrow and looking forward to the show.

Sirius received another food parcel and a bag of dead ferrets for Buckbeak along with tomorrow's Quibbler, reading what Harry had to endure had him in a rage but he knew this was not the time. The marauder in him couldn't help but chuckle at their plan, when this story broke tomorrow all eyes would be diverted away from the hunt for Sirius Black, he was really looking forward to a bath and a bed.

-oOoOo-

Albus Dumbledore had just had a relaxing bath and was currently sitting up in bed sipping hot chocolate, today's newspapers had no new information and the story, like a fire without fuel, would soon die out. Since that bloody hippogriff escaped the other night everything had been spiralling out of his control and he needed to understand why. He had re-examined every scrap of information from every angle and was still none the wiser, this was not a situation he was comfortable with. He needed to get hold of Potter and put an end to this lord and betrothal bullshit, how dare the arrogant little arsehole think he had any say in these matters, after all it wouldn't do to let people think they had a choice. Albus placed his now empty mug on the night stand and turned to attempt a few hours sleep, he would just have to wait and see what tomorrow brings.

A/N Please review – it really helps with the writing.

Chapter 8

On Monday morning Albus Dumbledore, dressed in a set of ridiculously expensive, ridiculously colourful robes and matching hat, was whistling to himself as he made his way into the great hall for breakfast. There the great wizard was greeted by a wave of antagonism that was almost palpable, emanating from three of the four houses as well as the staff table. He just knew this had to do with Potter, especially as they were all reading newspapers. With as much dignity as possible he grabbed an issue off the nearest table and the screaming headline sent waves of pleasure throughout his old body, it would be his last happy thought for quite some time.

Boy-Who-Lived Dies

by

Lord Harry James Potter

Late last week the boy-who-lived and everything he stood for died in the infirmary of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. His place was taken by Lord Harry James Potter who is nobody's pawn, and will protect his family and friends to the death, leaving the rest of the wizarding world to go screw itself!

We really need to congratulate Minister Fudge, Chief Warlock Dumbledore and Death Eater Snape for achieving what Voldemort has failed to do in all his attempts, push me to the point where I don't care if he takes over because he can't be any worse to me and mine than those already in authority.

The reason behind this change of heart is simple, an innocent man who has spent twelve years in Azkaban prison without even being questioned, far less given a trial, was going to have his soul removed by dementors kiss, despite evidence clearing his name.

Sirius Black is my godfather, an innocent man who has never even been charged with a crime, and definitely no death eater, yet found himself incarcerated in the maximum-security wing of the hell on earth that is Azkaban.

My mother and father gave their lives fighting Voldemort and defending the greater good but it wasn't worth it. Their sacrifice not only resulted in their son falling under the 'protection' of Albus Dumbledore but their best friend was thrown in prison.

While the innocent Sirius Black was incarcerated, death eaters with enough gold shouted loudly that they were 'under the imperius curse' and our beloved, bribed leaders let them walk among us still, some even working at the ministry and, of course Hogwarts.

Each of the three wise men had their own reason for wanting my godfather out of the picture and they are all less than pure, here they are:

The minister wanted Sirius killed for the positive headlines this would generate in the Daily Prophet, looking good is far more important than doing good. Did I spell your name right Cornelius Fudge?

Dumbledore wants him out of the way because Sirius is my legal guardian and might start asking awkward questions like 'why was I kidnapped as a baby and placed with muggles when my parents will expressly prohibited this action?' To late Albus I already know and also just how much your wrinkly old hands have stolen of my fortune.

The only person death eater Snape hates worse than my godfather is me, this was a win-win situation for him, as killing Sirius would also hurt me. Our beloved minister of magic was even going to reward him with an Order of Merlin, quite ironic when you think about it.

You see death eater Snape spied on a confidential conversation and reported it to his master, Voldemort. This led directly to my parents having to hide but unfortunately they trusted another death eater with their secret location and here's the ironic part, the ministry awarded the traitor with an Order of Merlin. Being the ministry though they couldn't even get that right and awarded it posthumously while the rat is still alive.

Yes Peter Pettigrew is still alive, I saw him, I spoke to him, along with other witnesses but the three wise men didn't want to listen, Sirius was going to be kissed for all the wrong reasons.

Pettigrew escaped again that night; the person who sold out my parents and murdered twelve muggles has gone looking for his old master. Make no mistake Voldemort will return, I have already banished him three times now but those days are long gone.

It's time to find a new champion and may I make a couple of suggestions, Albus Dumbledore and Severus Snape should have a lot more time on their hands since they won't be lying, manipulating or stealing from me anymore.

Some might think my reactions a bit on the harsh side so I have decided to bury that mythical character the 'boy-who-lived' and tell the real life story of Harry Potter.

Once you have read it, all I want is for you to ask yourself this simple question, if this was your experience of the magical world would you still be prepared to sacrifice your life for a cause that you no longer believe in?

I already know my answer.

What followed was a true life history of Harry Potter, from being left on a muggle doorstep on a cold Halloween night, note pinned to his blanket through all the major events up until, and of course including, the minister's announcement that Sirius was to be kissed without delay.

What was more poignant and shockingly reinforced his claims more than words ever could were the wizarding pictures taken of pensieve memories of the more unbelievable parts of the story.

An incredibly thin, plaintive ragamuffin that was a seven-year-old Harry, sitting quietly in his pathetic cupboard, frightened to make a sound.

Voldemort's face coming out the back of Quirrell's head and trying to kill an eleven-year-old Harry Potter.

Harry killing a sixty-three foot Basilisk with the fabled sword of Gryffindor.

A small boy plummeting to the earth after being attacked during a school Quidditch match by dementors the ministry had placed there for his supposed safety.

Peter Pettigrew in the shrieking shack pleading to Harry for his worthless life, four other witnesses watched while Snape lay unconscious on the floor.

It was a compelling story that shattered the myth and instead showed a child who had been abandoned, abused, manipulated and lied to by just about everyone he had met in his life. Surviving the killing curse was now going to be considered the least of his achievements, surviving his life since that night was a far greater deed.

Harry and Hermione had debated long and hard what to include and exclude from the article, there was no mention of prophecies, horcruxes, the fact that Sirius was an animagus or how he was rescued though just about everything else was in the Quibbler which was selling faster than it could be printed.

For all its reputation for mythical beasts the paper could now legitimately list amongst its achievements the first picture of Voldemort, a Basilisk and the man thought to have died a hero's death. It was incredible to think just how little was known about that night yet even what little they did know was proved to be completely wrong.

Albus was sitting on his throne at the staff table by the time he had finished reading and he was worried, he was formulating his rebuttal when the doors of the hall opened to admit five members of the school board, each with a copy of today's Quibbler clutched in their hand.

Dumbledore had just about managed to placate them enough to get the discussions moved out of the view of the whole school and into his office when the doors opened again and a delegation from the goblin nation entered the great hall.

The delegation was led by Master Zutekin, flanked by six goblin guards as he approached the staff table where Dumbledore was still seated; the goblin removed a scroll from his robes and began to read aloud.

“Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore, you are charge with conspiring with a goblin clan to subvert and overthrow the legal ruler of the goblin nation. You are also charged with conspiring with a member of that clan, namely Sickyle, to illegally remove gold from the account of which he was in charge. Lord Potter has requested we use all means legally at our disposal to recover all the gold stolen from him and to punish the guilty parties involved, we are well aware this is a school full of children so have left the traitor Sickyle’s head on the desk in your office rather than present it here.”

This brought about an audible gasp that rippled through the hall, which had been unusually silent as everyone strained to hear what was going on. There was also the thought that if they stayed quiet they wouldn’t be noticed and sent to their common rooms or classes.

Zutekin continued reading, “all of your accounts have been frozen and all assets seized, should you make an appearance at any goblin facility you will be arrested and tried under goblin law for your crimes against our nation. All documents pertaining to your illegal dealings against the goblin nation and Lord Potter have been forwarded to the investigation arm of the auror department along with a request that you be arrested and handed over to the goblin nation.”

Albus knew that Hagrid would dance Swan Lake with the Bolshoi Ballet in front of the Queen before the ministry would hand a wizard over to the goblins. The ‘all accounts’ had him terrified; he wasn’t sure how many accounts they had frozen but if they got them all he was in deep shit. Being vilified in the press was one thing but being poor scared the life out of him, he had spent his considerable number

of years quietly amassing his fortune and could not contemplate being poorer than a Weasley.

Albus had totally overlooked the fact that the goblin declaration had just validated the entire Quibbler story in the minds of everyone present in the hall, staff, students and school governors were all reassessing their dealings and reactions to the headmaster.

It was into this reflective atmosphere that Harry and Hermione walked arm in arm into the great hall, "sorry were late for breakfast," said Harry "but it doesn't really matter as we're just here to collect a couple of our friends."

-oOoOo-

The ministry for magic was in total meltdown, it seemed like half the population of the wizarding world had turned up and being rather vocal in their demands, the magical multitude had spoken.

The wanted Fudge sacked, justice for Sirius and a delegation sent post haste to Lord Potter, begging him not to abandon them, most were old enough to remember how the first war was progressing before baby Harry's intervention. Not one person currently in the ministry building had any illusions that they would do any better the second time around.

Harry Potter was the saviour of the wizarding world and the idea they had treated him so badly he would leave them to the not so tender mercies of that monster Voldemort did not bear thinking about. This needed to be fixed, and quickly, their leaders had better deliver or they wouldn't be their leaders much longer.

Fudge was in shock, plastered all over the Quibbler was information that he didn't want the general public to be aware of; he took the crowds that were gathered in the atrium as confirmation of the correctness of his notion that the public couldn't handle the truth. He had ordered Amelia Bones to send aurors to arrest the Potter brat under causing a public menace charges but she had refused, citing all the aurors were needed to protect the ministry at the moment.

Fudge's sense of self-preservation kicked in as he realised that removing protection from the minister at this time was not a good idea. Amelia Bones knew Harry had committed no crime, she also knew having him arrested would cost the Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement her job, though she doubted if her aurors would even obey that command.

Fudge was making the same mistake Dumbledore was, in any choice between the three wizards almost all the general population would choose the boy who saved them from the nightmare that was the last war.

The thought of Voldemort returning sent shivers of dread running through the battle hardened woman, Amelia knew that the peace time cuts to her department left their world seriously under protected to the threat of another war.

Fudge was bemoaning the fact that he was having to make his own decisions; Lucius had still not made an appearance and he was getting worried. The much-maligned minister then decided, against all advice offered, to speak to 'his people' and explain there had been a misunderstanding.

He appeared on a platform, looking down on his people as the crowd became silent, Fudge took this as a sign of respect and started addressing them in the most condescending tone imaginable, little realising that the only words they wanted to hear was "I resign!"

Fudge stood stock still, shocked beyond belief while looking at the ripe tomato that was currently sliding down his previously spotless robes. The muggle influence on the wizarding world was never more apparent, to fire a spell at the minister of magic, even one that was as big an arsehole as Fudge, came with an extended vacation in the dementor hotel on the lovely island of Azkaban.

On the other hand conjuring a piece of ripe fruit and letting the minister have it broke no laws, felt great and totally humiliated the pompous prick. The air was soon alive with ripe fruit being banished in the direction of the minister, magical people would never lower

themselves to throw something when a banishing charm was more accurate and required no physical effort.

Amelia and the attending aurors had immediately erected shield charms to protect themselves from the onslaught; she eventually had the aurors cover Fudge with their shields after he started looking like a bottle of ketchup.

She cleaned his robes using her wand before offering her un-listened to advice once again, "there is really only one way out of this situation that leaves you any dignity whatsoever Cornelius."

He nodded and they got the crowd quietened down again before Fudge spoke once more, "I apologise if I have let you down, a minister cannot perform his duties without the will of the people behind him. With this display here today it is blatantly obvious I no longer have your support therefore I have no other course of action than to tender my immediate resignation as minister of magic."

The corresponding cheer and applause was the loudest Fudge had ever received in his entire political career.

-oOoOo-

Albus glared at the young couple with no sign of the kindly grandfather façade he usually tried to portray, "Mr Potter you cannot waltz in and out of Hogwarts as the notion takes you, the school rules are their for the protection of everyone. No one is above the law, not even the boy-who-lived."

Harry just shook his head, "you never learn do you old man."

McGonagall exploded, "Mr Potter, you will treat the headmaster with respect!"

Harry's voice was colder and contained more power than anyone had heard before, "respect has to be earned, you lost all right to criticise me about respect when you stood back and allowed a member of your house to be cursed by Malfoy right in front of your eyes and did nothing. You let that old fools pet death eater give me a detention,

insult my betrothed and you were too much of a coward to interfere. You made us ashamed to have been Gryffindors.”

You could have heard a pin drop in the hall with McGonagall appearing as if she'd been physically slapped.

Harry turned his attention back to Dumbledore, “and as for you old man, I have told you to address me as Lord Potter. School rules for our protection, are you bullshitting me? I am so glad that you think no one is above the law but I would like to wager this is another one of these ‘do as I say, not as I do’ situations. One name old man – Snape!”

Albus tried to get the conversation back on safer ground, “I was merely pointing out that to officially leave you need written permission from your guardian to make it legal.”

Harry walked forward to McGonagall, “I believe this falls under your remit as deputy, here is my permission slip stating that I am leaving Hogwarts for good, effective immediately. This is Hermione's, Neville's and Luna's stating the same.”

As Harry handed them to McGonagall he was joined by Hermione, Neville and Luna at the front of the staff table. Albus was out his seat like a flash and snatched Harry's permission slip out of McGonagall's hand.

“This slip is not legal, it's signed by Miss Granger's parents!” Albus declared triumphantly.

“Behind the times again old man, Daniel and Emma Granger are now my legal guardians in the muggle world, as Lord Potter I am emancipated in the magical world and need no guardian.”

Dumbledore seemed to shrink into himself, “you gave out the Dursleys address in the Quibbler yet no longer live there, have you any idea what you've done?”

It was Hermione who answered and the look on her face scared the shit out of anyone with a hint of common sense, “on the contrary old man, we know exactly what we’ve done!” Anyone messing with her Harry was in a whole heap of trouble.

-oOoOo-

Vernon Dursley was having a good morning, no a brilliant morning – the best morning in over twelve years.

When that man had turned up in Privet Drive on Saturday, Vernon had almost shut the door in his face as soon as he mentioned his freak nephew’s name, what a mistake that would have been.

He was offered ten thousand pounds and given a guarantee that Harry would never contact them again if they signed over his guardianship to a couple of dentists, Vernon would have paid money to be rid of the freak.

He had finished his breakfast, even kissed Petunia before heading out the door to work and discovering why only half the wizarding population was currently at the ministry, the rest were in Privet Drive and they were pretty pissed off.

-oOoOo-

Severus Snape was in a foul mood to eclipse all his other foul moods combined, Draco had rushed to his godfather’s room at first sight of the Quibbler, clutching a copy purloined from a first year puff.

They were striding towards the great hall with Severus desperate to find a victim to unleash some of his anger, he would bet that new records for points deductions and detentions would be set today. How dare that arrogant little shit print those things about him, the fact that every word was true had no bearing on Snape’s anger. He didn’t even consider that he might be in trouble, Albus would sort this out and Potter’s life would be hell from now on.

They entered the great hall and caught sight of the object of all his hatred and anger, standing there in front of the staff table as if he

owned the school, Snape literally screamed "POTTER!" and his wand had sent a curse flying before his brain had even engaged.

As soon as she heard Snape's voice Hermione whirled round and the cruciatus curse hit her squarely in the chest, the pain was unbelievable but only for a split second as Harry was in her mind telling her how to beat it and his hands were placed on her shoulders to provide the power if needed.

Pomona Sprout had read today's Quibbler and watched this morning's events unfold with an uneasy feeling in the pit of her stomach, she had read what that poor boy had went through and liked to think if he was in Hufflepuff she would have stood up to Albus and Severus better than her friend Minerva did. She didn't think she was a better witch or head of house than Minerva, she just didn't believe every word that came out of Albus Dumbledore's mouth was the truth. If he'd pulled some greater good crap on any of her puffs she would have exploded in his face, she might only manage to singe that ludicrous beard but at least she would make her point. Minerva just followed along blindly and Filius followed Minerva's lead.

When Severus entered and fired that darkest of curses she was on her feet and reaching for her wand before the impossible happened right in front of her, the Granger girl just stood up straight and accepted the curse, smiling at Snape in the process.

The sweat was pouring down Snape's face as he tried with all his might to end the curse but to no avail, the mudblood bitch had got in the way and now was even smiling at him.

Albus Dumbledore shouted, "Enough! Mr Potter end this at once."

Harry calmly replied, "Students, staff and members of the school board please note the usual behaviour in Hogwarts, the head of Slytherin house fires an unforgivable curse at a student who's not even holding a wand yet it's my fault. Professor Snape can do no wrong and literally gets away with murder, just out of interest how did he escape going to Azkaban? You really have outdone yourself this time old man."

Harry's voice took on an icy tone again, "your pet death eater has just attacked the betrothed of an ancient and noble house in front of hundreds of witnesses. His arse belongs to me and anyone interfering will, I can assure you be dealt with in an appropriate manner."

Harry was trying to divert attention away from the fact that Hermione was draining the power right out of Snape's magical core, they had quickly decided to leave him just a fraction above a squib, he should be able to cast a 'lumos' but not much else, a reminder of what he'd lost. Of course he was going to lose more than that.

Snape's power drain very quickly reached the required level then Hermione cast a wandless reducto which blew off his wand hand, simultaneously Harry cast the same wandless spell removing his other arm just below the elbow.

Draco had made his way to the side, un-noticed he thought, and had his wand lined up on Potter when a stinging hex made him drop his wand. Luna had tracked him from the second she was sure Harry and Hermione had the Snape incident under control, Malfoy's wand hadn't hit the floor before the right fist of Neville Longbottom connected with the blond Slytherins jaw, Draco went down like a sack of potatoes but Neville had years of contained anger to release and jumped on him to continue pummeling the hated face of his worse antagonist.

After a few punches a gentle hand on his cheek stopped his onslaught, Neville looked up into the face of an angel as Luna softly spoke to him, "enough Neville, your better than he is in every way, he's not even worth your anger."

She offered him her hand and Neville took it, standing up to see that Snape was down and bleeding while Harry was looking at him and smiling.

"Now do you understand why I want a Longbottom guarding my back? You two are quite the team you know."

Neville glanced down and realised he was still holding Luna's hand, it felt so right that he had no intention of letting it go anytime soon.

Since Snape entered the hall until the Potter's rendered him harmless had taken about a minute, but it was a minute that would have major repercussions on the wizarding world. Hermione Granger had taken out Snape while under the cruciatus curse, Harry Potter had just made Dumbledore back down, add to that the two most bullied people in the school had just demolished the worst bully.

Albus was trying to regain some control over a silent great hall that had just witnessed events thought to be impossible, Poppy was sealing Severus's wounds as the parts removed were blasted to pieces. He asked tiredly, "Harry what do you want?"

"I don't want anything and here's something to save you hours of scheming to try and get me back under your control," Harry took out his wand, "I, Lord Harry James Potter swear on my magic I will never be a student at Hogwarts again."

Hermione, Neville and Luna all took the same magical oath in front of a still shocked and silent great hall, it was with an air of defeat that Dumbledore slumped back into his seat as the quartet headed towards the doors.

Harry and Hermione were trying to appear calm but inside they were bouncing about like two year-olds on a sugar high, though it was adrenalin pumping through their bodies.

Hermione felt no remorse about what they had just done to that evil bastard and her core had just received a permanent boost. To receive the dark mark you had to kill someone in front of Voldemort, torturing him or her first for the Dark Lord's entertainment got you extra death eater points.

The had both read the account of Snape's initiation and the fact that it involved a muggle child of about seven left them both feeling quite sick, the fact that stupid old bastard then employed him to teach in a school beggared belief.

They would have preferred the knowledge that they could ignore the cruciatus curse to have remained a secret for just a little longer, but Harry had acted instinctively as soon as someone tried to hurt her.

Harry was struggling to believe they'd pulled it off, even the part about filling the two hospital beds. He would watch with interest to see what happens to that greasy bastard who tried to hurt his Hermione, he was so tempted to kill him outright but decided to make him suffer, he should go to Azkaban for casting an unforgivable, on a student no less but Harry wouldn't be surprised if Albus weaved some tale and the bastard got off.

The only thing stopping him pushing the situation was without magic he was already being punished and without hands, eating breakfast was Snape's new challenge, he could forget potions. Even that bastard of a rat needed his body's magic to make that silver hand work. Harry wasn't too worried about Snape looking for revenge, having the knowledge of how to fire a gun wasn't much use if you didn't actually have access to one, far less the means to hold it.

Harry had discussed with Hermione the possibility of turning dark but she had explained lovingly that neither of them could ever stand back and watch someone tortured, far less carry out the act themselves. They now classed Death eaters as rabid dogs for which there was really only one treatment, both had been brought up as muggles and now wondered how many of those missing persons cases in the news were death eaters carrying on their traditions.

As far as they were concerned having a dark mark amounted to having murderer tattooed on your forehead, their doubts could be put to rest with a quick glance at Voldemort's memories and discovering just how evil any marked individual was.

They were nearly at the doors of the great hall when all their carefully laid plans went tits up, neither Harry nor Hermione could believe who had caused it, Hannah Abbot!

-oOoOo-

Excerpt from BBC News

The emergency services in Little Whining were called this morning to deal with the most bizarre incident any of them had ever seen. A house in Privet Drive appeared to demolish itself for no apparent reason while the top of the range family car was discovered crushed into the cupboard under the stairs. What was even stranger was the ostrich and walrus that were found in the back garden, both animals appeared to be in a state of extreme distress and attacked anyone who came near them.

A specialist from London Zoo was eventually called in and had to shoot both animals with tranquiliser darts before the situation could be brought under control.

When asked for his opinion the specialist replied, "this really is a strange case, both animals are obviously used to being around humans, in fact you would almost think they knew what a gun was. The walrus couldn't move much due to his size so was rather an easy target, the ostrich though zoomed about for a few minutes before actually trying to hide behind the walrus. As an ostrich only hides its head I was left with rather an obvious shot in the end."

Both the ostrich and walrus are now being held in government quarantine facilities until their origins can be established, and a police search is being conducted for the owners of the property, a Vernon and Petunia Dursley.

A/N Please Review

Chapter 9

Sirius Black had made it to Potter Manor without the slightest hint of trouble; Harry's revelations must have the wizarding world otherwise occupied he thought. The wards had been set to allow him access and a house elf had just made him lunch, he was starting to worry about the non-appearance of his godson when Moony portkeyed in.

A brotherly hug later and Sirius was demanding information.

Remus was laughing, "I wouldn't even know where to begin far less believe that I know everything that's going on, apparently Lord Potter and his betrothed are going to sit down tonight and reveal all. That should class as a three bottle of Brandy conversation."

Remus was laughing as he watched his friend trying to come to terms with the lord Potter and betrothed part; just wait till tonight he thought.

Remus held out the portkey and both marauders headed south.

-oOoOo-

Hannah Abbot had always liked Harry, truth be told she had a bit of a crush but then so did half the witches in Hogwarts. Reading about his life had left her feeling sick that someone the same age as her had to endure so much. Hannah also felt ashamed, first she had been convinced he was the Heir of Slytherin last year and then again a few days ago when he had summed up Hufflepuffs so accurately it hurt.

Loyalty was prized by puffs but it was rather easy to be loyal to people walking around wearing the same coloured robes as you who's loyalty could be depended on. The first time she was required to be loyal to someone other than a puff she had easily let herself be convinced that Harry was setting a monster on muggle borns in the castle, despite the glaring evidence that his mother and best friend, now his betrothed was muggle born. She had failed him, and herself badly that could not be allowed to happen again.

Hannah stood up and took out her wand, "I, Hannah Abbot, swear on my magic that I will never be a student at Hogwarts again."

Every eye in the great hall was now on the little blond Hufflepuff but she stood proudly, blushing profusely but declaring her belief in Harry Potter and refusing to be part of the system that had abused the boy for so long.

Ernie Macmillan knew he'd made an arse of himself over the whole Heir of Slytherin debacle and had apologised to Harry afterwards. Reading what Harry had been going through at the time just made him feel worse.

Harry's comments about puffs and loyalty the other day had caused quite a bit of discussion in the common room and most were surprised at how insightful they were, it was almost as if he had inside knowledge of their house. When his friend Hannah stood up and took her oath Ernie knew instinctively it was the right thing to do, and was on his feet seconds later taking his own oath.

Susan Bones and Justin Finch Fletchely were both up and also took a magical oath, effectively leaving Hogwarts with a year group without puffs.

At the Gryffindor table Colin Creevey was up like a flash to say his magical oath and support his idol, Ginny Weasley stood up and had her wand out before Head Boy Percy snatched it out her hand, he then proceeded to take Ron's and the twin's wands as well.

Harry and Hermione couldn't help but think that Percival would be in for the bollocking of his life when Molly got wind of this.

Dean Thomas had spent the year wishfully gazing at the cute little redhead that gave him butterflies in his stomach, he knew that Ginny had her heart set on Harry but now that he was well and truly claimed Dean though he stood a chance with the pocket sized vision of freckled loveliness.

When her brother took Ginny's wand and she sat back down Dean thought this was his chance to console the gorgeous girl who had been such a feature of his dreams lately, one look at her face and those dreams turned to nightmares.

Clearly etched on Ginny's face was not the disappointment with a touch of anger he expected but hatred, envy and utter loathing, giving muggle born Dean the classic impression of the wicked witch of his childhood. He tried to imagine coming home to that after a few drinks down the pub with his mates; the resulting mental images had him on his feet and swearing a magical oath to leave the terrifying sight behind.

Seamus Finnigan hadn't a clue what just came over his best mate but he wasn't about to be left behind so he took the oath as well.

Lavender Brown watched as all the Gryffindor guys in her year aligned themselves with Harry, the thought of Ron 'what are table manners?' Weasley being the only one left had her on her feet.

Parvati was left in a quandary, she looked towards her twin who nodded and both stood, taking their magical oath together. The first claw had joined the exodus, but due to Harry and Hermione's confrontation with Luna's bullies; Padma was the only claw other than Luna to leave the castle.

Daphne Greengrass belonged to a family that had managed to stay neutral during the war but here was a chance to align herself with the light side, Daphne was of the opinion that the only thing sitting on the fence got you was a splinter in your arse. She nodded to her best friend Tracy Davies and the hall got its latest shock of the day as two Slytherins supported Harry Potter.

Albus fired off a noise spell to get the hall's attention, "Enough of this nonsense, get to your classes now!"

A voice boomed of the walls, 'STOP!' so demanding of attention was the command that even the ghosts froze in position. "STUDENTS WHO TOOK AN OATH COME FORWARD, THE REST OF YOU GO TO CLASSES." The amplified voice of Professor Sprout was not something to be disobeyed, though Ginny had to be dragged out the hall. The head of Hufflepuff turned on the beleaguered headmaster and let him have it, both barrels.

“You whiskered wanker, these children are supposed to be in your care yet you gave them an order that directly contravened the magical oath they just took. Are you really that stupid or do you care so little for your students that you were prepared to let them loose their magic!” She turned her ire on Minerva and Filius, “were you just going to sit there and let him walk all over you as usual?”

She lined up her main target again, “Albus I’ve watched your manipulations and left you alone, protecting my own house, but a young man has claimed that isn’t enough – and he’s right. My conscience will no longer allow me to work here, so you can take my job and shove it where the sun doesn’t shine.”

She walked down to the students and was pulled to the side by Harry and Hermione, “Professor what you did just confirmed our opinion of you, we would like to offer you a job!”

Sprout was speechless so Harry continued, “I was intending to hire private tutors for the four of us but it would appear our numbers have swollen, I intend to take care of them and would appreciate your help with the organisation as well as teaching. Unlike some I take my obligations seriously.”

Pomona Sprout had intended to help the students anyway she could, four of them were former puffs, “we need to get them out of here so there’s no danger of them triggering that oath then we contact their guardians and see where we go from there.”

Harry and Hermione had enjoyed their time in Hufflepuff and genuinely admired Pomona, when she asked how you were getting on it was to see if you needed any help, not to report it to Dumbledore. “We have the place and the means professor.”

A voice from the back of the hall shouted, “and here’s one signature for you.”

Amelia Bones had arrived at Hogwarts with a couple of her aurors looking for any sign of Harry Potter, just before entering the hall she heard the voice of her niece’s best friend closely followed by Susan take a magical oath. They cast disillusionment charms on themselves

and sneaked into the hall to find out what the hell was going on, they could have worn death eater outfits for all the attention anyone was paying.

When Albus gave that order she was just about to tear him a new arsehole when Pomona beat her to it. After Harry said they would face up to their obligations she had to say something, Susan had put herself firmly in the Potter camp and Amelia believed that was the place to be.

“If you have a form there Minerva I’ll gladly sign it to get Susan out of a school where the headmaster gives orders that could cost students their magic.” Amelia turned to Dumbledore, “looks like you lost a head of house.”

“Two actually!” declared one of the school board members.

“Severus has yet to be dismissed from his post.” Albus was getting ready to bullshit when the five members of the school board turned as one and glared at him.

“If Severus Snape is not immediately dismissed then you will be out of a job before the end of today. Even without that the only thing that may save you is there are no suitable replacements at the moment.” The board member who spoke looked at Minerva and Filius with distain before casting a glance at Pomona.

“Sorry sir, we got there first.” Harry said.

“What are your greenhouses like Lord Potter?” Pomona asked.

Hermione whispered in her ear and Pomona must have liked what she heard because her whole face lit up as she said, “I’m in!”

Amelia’s professional curiosity was piqued, “just what did Severus do that is actually going to get him fired?”

It was Susan who answered, “He hit Hermione with the Cruciatus Curse.”

Hannah chipped in, “but she just smiled at him, then blew his arms right off!”

Amelia and the aurors immediately drew their wands, “where is he?”

“Infirmary!” chimed a dozen people.

At a nod from Amelia both aurors left at once, “Chief Warlock, were you intending to report this? Were there any witnesses I need to protect in case they suddenly lose their memory?”

Harry laughed, he’d just decided he liked this woman, “Madam Bones not even Dumbledore is capable of obliterating the entire student and staff population as well as five members of the school board and seven goblins.”

Amelia looked as if Christmas had come early, “and what did the Chief Warlock do about this attack?”

Susan couldn’t help but volunteer the information, “he told Harry to behave himself, and then Hermione blasted Snape.”

The school board member was not for letting Albus off the hook, “he performed an unforgivable curse on a student without even a hint of provocation and is now in the infirmary minus hands, I would just like to hear headmaster what possible grounds you would have for not dismissing him immediately.”

With as much dignity as he could muster Albus proceeded to put his foot right in it, “everyone is entitled to a trial, innocent until proven guilty.”

Harry was on him in a flash, his whole body tense with anger, “so Severus deserves a trial but Sirius doesn’t? Just how do you come up with this Chief Warlock – you are not the law.”

Albus was on his feet, his anger rising at just how shitty his day was turning, “neither are you Lord Potter!” Harry’s title was pronounced with as much sarcasm as the old man could manufacture.

Harry's smile was cold enough to freeze whiskers, "in this case I am, he attacked my betrothed allowing me to walk from here to the infirmary and legally kill him. That is my right as head of a noble and ancient house and anyone interfering with that right would be breaking the law."

"You would kill a man in cold blood, that's pretty dark Harry even for you." Albus was trying to keep the delight out of his voice at trapping the young shit so easy.

Harry's voice was quiet when he answered but everyone in the hall could still hear every word, some wished they couldn't. "Did he ever tell you how he got his mark Chief Warlock?" Harry was seriously messing with the old fart's head, "apparently when performing that curse it lowers your mental shields and he was thinking of the first time he used it. She was a muggle child who appeared to be about seven years old, Snape was really delighted that he managed to draw out her suffering enough to please his new master. After the child was foaming at the mouth and no longer responding to the curse he cast Avada Kedavra then knelt before Voldemort to receive his reward, the dark mark."

Hermione had joined Luna with her arms round Neville, both witches were hugging the sobbing boy.

"Snape still thinks of that as one of the best nights of his life, now ask me again old man if you think I could kill him in cold blood. This is the type of person you have chosen to be in charge of children and time and time again defend against being dark despite all evidence to the contrary. You are dead to me old man and the only time I want to see you is at your trial for the crimes you've committed. Out of your own mouth came the words 'no one is above the law' and I agree, not even you Albus Dumbledore."

Harry turned his back on Dumbledore and approached his friend, putting one hand on each shoulder, "did you know your mother is my godmother?" this got Neville's attention and stopped the tears. "Voldemort was going after two children Nev, me and you. Our

parents knew this and made a promise that if anything happened to one pair then the other couple would raise both boys, we should have grown up as brothers Nev but that manipulative old bastard up there had his own agenda.”

“How could you know that? I demand you tell me now!” Albus had seriously lost it, spittle was flying from his mouth as he screamed at Harry and his wand was pointed at the former Hogwarts students back.

Harry turned round slowly, “in the back old man, even Snape had the decency to look Hermione in the eye as he cursed her. You can demand all you want old man, the only lesson you’ve taught me is that knowledge is power, so why should I give it to you?” Hermione had appeared at his side, closely followed by Neville and Luna, soon everyone who was leaving was standing beside Harry with their wands pointed at Dumbledore.

The sight of fifteen students all, with the exception of Harry and Hermione, pointing their wands at Albus finally shamed McGonagall into doing something she should have done years ago. “Albus lower that wand this instant, do you realise the penalties for firing a curse at the head of an ancient and noble house?” her glare forced his wand down, the students lowered theirs but not one of them put it away. Eight of her former Gryffindors had shown more courage this morning than Minerva McGonagall had in years, that was a situation she could not allow to continue.

“Lord Potter, if you find yourself in need of a transfiguration teacher I would be honoured to be considered, I find myself unable to continue working here any longer.”

Harry knew that whatever her faults she was a superb teacher, and where McGonagall went Flitwick was sure to follow. “Professor I have cast aspersions over your blind loyalty to your former head teacher, but I never thought anything other than you were a brilliant teacher who is passionate about her subject. My only reservation would be whether you could be trusted not to tell tales out of class.”

Minerva knew exactly what she was being asked, "I'm quite prepared to swear a loyalty oath my Lord and understand the need for one."

"I think there has been more than enough oaths sworn here today, lets get to that later," answered Harry who was pleased his prediction came true as Filius asked for a job as well.

Dumbledore's rage was matched by the members of the board; Hogwarts had just lost all four heads of house and any chance of sacking Albus. They could place him on probation but with what was happening next term they couldn't afford to lose him from the castle as well. They would have to draft in emergency teachers for the rest of the week to save Hogwarts from having to close early.

"Lord Potter I really must speak with you about a matter of some urgency," Amelia said.

"Madam Bones please call me Harry, if you want a job I will gladly hire you but then who would I trust in the ministry? I think we need to take any discussion out of this castle, you are welcome to come with us, see where Susan will be staying and join us for lunch after we get our business done."

Harry had been communicating with Hermione using the rings and she was already speaking to Zutekin about contacting parents and informing them of what happened today.

Harry spoke to everyone who had cast their oath today, "I would like to thank Hannah and every one else who gave such a public display of faith this morning and hope I can live up to it. Gringotts will contact your guardians and explain what occurred, it will then be their decision what happens next – those of muggle decent will be able to phone home from where we're going. Dobby!"

Dobby appeared and drew stares for his dress code, "their trunks are all packed and rooms are being made ready as we speak, we have called some elves from other Potter properties to assist but four elves have asked the castle for permission to join our house and Hogwarts said yes, the final decision is yours Harry Potter sir."

Harry held a brief mental debate with Hermione before making a decision, “tell them they would be most welcome Dobby.”

Hermione came over and gave Harry the information gleamed from Zutekin on the portkey, which allowed it to be expanded so everyone could take hold,

“Don’t we need to be outside the Hogwarts wards?” Minerva asked.

“This portkey will take us home from where ever we are,” Harry gave a bow to the now departing goblins before portkeying out of Hogwarts where a headmaster sat alone at the staff table while the board members were in an impromptu huddle trying to figure out what to do next.

-oOoOo-

It was an astonished Dan, Emma and Remus who watched the cavalcade enter the château; Harry and Hermione were like pied pipers as they led their guests into the room that had become the family lounge.

The three adults were not helped by Harry’s announcement to the company, “welcome everyone to the Potter Institute of Sorcery and Spells.”

“When did that happen?” Remus asked.

Hermione was trying not to laugh, “you know Harry, and he just makes it up as we go along but I love him for it.” Her betrothed was given a demonstration with a searing kiss.

Harry held her close and forgot about everyone else, “are you sure you’re ok?”

“Why, what happened?” demanded Dan.

Susan again filled in the blanks, "Snape used the cruciatus curse on her."

Dan and Emma were angry but Remus was enraged, he was holding Hermione at arms length looking into her eyes to asses the damage before anyone realised he'd even moved.

"I'm fine Remus but thanks," she embarrassed the werewolf by pulling him into a hug but her dad wasn't buying it.

"I thought you could protect her Harry?" he asked accusingly.

Hermione just sighed, "Dad, I don't have a scratch on me while that bastard is in the infirmary rendered harmless."

Susan just couldn't resist it, "and harmless!"

That broke the ice and everyone who was there laughed off all the tension that had accumulated throughout a pretty stressful morning.

Dan and Emma wanted to hear what happened this morning so Remus took everyone else to get them settled in their new rooms that the elves had arranged, Harry and Hermione sat down with the Grangers and Amelia to find out why she was looking for him in the first place.

After the introductions and confirmation that she could talk freely in front of the Grangers, Amelia started bringing them up to date on what happened at the ministry.

"Lord Potter, as of this morning the manhunt for Sirius Black has been called off, if any one has a method of contacting him could they please pass on the message that he has been released into the custody of Lord Potter until a trial date can be arranged. Does these arrangements meet with your satisfaction my Lord?"

Harry couldn't contain the smile that had broken out all over his face, "that's brilliant Madam Bones, if I see him I will be sure to pass on the message."

Amelia nodded in understanding, she would bet her pension that Harry was involved in the escape and knew exactly where his godfather was, she was also sure the man was innocent and would do everything in her power to prove it. "Minister Fudge resigned this morning after an angry mob started pelting him with ripe tomatoes, the ministry is not quite sure how to proceed as it would appear the Chief Warlock will be facing criminal charges as well."

The thought of the minister getting pelted cheered the teens up no end but they needed decisions made, "if Harry offered to drop the charges with the proviso that Dumbledore resigned from the Wizengamot do you think he would take the offer?" Hermione asked.

It was a thoughtful Amelia who answered, "He just may, would you like me to make that offer?"

Harry nodded, "we don't think he's going to end up in Azkaban so resigning might be better than a prolonged court case holding everything up, this way he has no charges against him and we still get what we want."

Amelia became sombre, "sadly I have some bad news for you, it would appear an angry mob of witches and wizards congregated outside number 4 Privet Drive this morning with the result that the house and automobile have been totally destroyed with your aunt and uncle being transfigured into a ostrich and a walrus. The muggles had turned up before a magical reversal squad could get there, both animals were knocked out using some kind of fired dart and removed from the premises, we reckon that with everything else that's happening it might take weeks to trace them."

Harry and Hermione were almost falling off their seats with laughter, the image of Vernon as a walrus with a tranquiliser dart protruding from his arse completed the journey, they were on the floor with tears running down their faces.

Only years as an auror allowed Amelia to maintain a straight face but it was so very hard, she so wished she could have been there.

“Your aunt and uncle have officially been posted missing in the muggle world with your cousin being collected from school by his aunt Marge. Officially I have no position on this, unofficially one of the reversal squad has offered to let you have the memory of the muggles trying to subdue both animals for a signed Harry Potter poster for his seven year old daughter.”

“You can get posters of Harry?” Emma asked, not quite believing it.

“You can get anything with Harry’s face on it, I’m told the teenage underwear is a big seller.” Amelia wasn’t joking so Emma looked towards her daughter and lifted an enquiring eyebrow.

“Mother I have the real thing, why would I need the underwear? That’s not to say that half the witches in Hogwarts don’t own a pair.”

Harry was in too good a mood to let this trouble him in the slightest, “Amelia I would sign it in blood for that memory, and I would quite happily meet the little girl and thank her dad for making my day.”

“Ok official business over but on a more serious and personal level if you both have found a way to defeat the torture curse as head of the DMLE I would be eternally grateful if you would share that knowledge.”

‘Amelia this is not one of those ‘knowledge is power’ situations, quite the opposite in fact as you need the power to use the knowledge. When a curse is fired at you it is basically someone releasing their magical energy and commanding it to have a certain effect on the victim, if the intended victim is powerful enough they can override that command rendering the magical energy harmless.’

Amelia was flummoxed at Harry’s explanation so he stood up to demonstrate, “if you fire a stunner at me your commanding magical energy to leave your body and render mine unconscious.” She nodded that she understood that much, “if I change the command on that energy to give me a nice warm glow then I’ve rendered the curse harmless.”

Amelia understood the theory; it just didn't seem possible so Harry invited her to cast a stunner. Amelia stood, fired her stunner then had to sit back down in shock as she watched Harry just absorb the curse with no ill effects whatsoever.

"You need an immense amount of magical power before that can be achieved, Hermione is about ninety five percent of the way there but I was able to share some of my power with her due to our betrothal bond."

Amelia looked like someone had snatched the holy grail right out of her hands, both teens knew this was not a selfish thing but the thought of protecting her aunts and her niece, they decided to take a chance.

Hermione asked, "Madam Bones could we have a witches oath that you will not tell anyone the information we're about to give you, I promise none of it breaks any laws."

Amelia needed these two to trust her so gave her oath immediately.

Hermione was smiling as she continued; "when we released that article all we hoped for was to have Fudge and Dumbledore at each other's throats, allowing us to quietly train and carry out tasks we've set ourselves. Harry has defeated Voldemort three times but he keeps coming back, our tasks are to strip away his protection and finish him once and for all. We are hoping to achieve this before Christmas."

Amelia knew she wasn't being lied to or bullshitted, all her years in the force had given her a very good nose for those things. She also knew that this was only part of the information but if they carried out their task she was quite prepared to cut them some slack, shit she would do anything even remotely possible to assist them.

"How can I help?" was her reply but she wasn't ready for Harry's answer.

"By becoming minister of magic!"

-oOoOo-

Daphne Greengrass admired the beautiful room she was going to be sharing with her best friend Tracy, it had the Slytherin dorms beat all ends up with even it's own on-suite and a balcony. No more sharing a shower block and, with the boys being on the other side of the corridor, no worries if they decided to sunbathe for an hour or three. With Susan and Hannah on one side and Lavender with the Patel's on the other she didn't even have to endure that troll Millicent or Pansy 'when Draco and I are married' Parkinson. Her only concern was the reaction of her parents, she hoped they'd understand but if not she would be doing her schooling in France next term, even without the oath stepping back into the Slytherin dorm would probably cost Daphne her life.

Dean Thomas thought he'd made one of the best decisions of his life, even though Seamus and him were sharing a room with Colin he still considered himself to be streets ahead of where he was this morning. All three boys had muggle backgrounds and had phoned home, getting immediate permission to stay there for now and continue their schooling with Harry next year. Potter was apparently the new magic word for opening doors in their world and all the parents were delighted their kids were associated with him.

Dean was also re-assessing his choice in girls after that narrow escape and realized he must have been blind; there were currently four single guys here, and Colin. There were seven unattached females; each one of them gorgeous, and Dean liked those odds a lot better. Neville and Luna hadn't stopped holding hands since this morning and after his wicked take down of Malfoy he would have been serious babe competition but the little blond former claw looked to have him off the market.

Dean couldn't remember the last time he looked forward to classes as much.

Neville's whole world had been turned upside down, he'd just left Hogwarts after knocking Malfoy's lights out and it looked like he had a

girlfriend as well. He glanced at the little blond who just smiled and nodded, yip – he had a girlfriend!

It was amazing how well they just fitted together after only speaking to each other just a few days ago, Neville sensed in his new girlfriend the same fragility that he had in abundance, and he was sure combined they could be greater than Neville and Luna alone, they complemented each other so well.

Luna walked hand in hand along the corridor with her first ever boyfriend and wondered how she got this lucky, one minute walking along the Hogwarts corridor in pain from being forced to wear the wrong shoe to then watching her tormentors fall over themselves trying to make it up to her.

When Harry and Hermione left she had gravitated towards the wizard by her side, he came with excellent references so she gave him her trust. They had rooms next to each other on the same floor as Harry and Hermione because they had been expecting to leave Hogwarts; the rest of the morning was just plain crazy.

Watching Neville beat his tormentor was hard and she knew he would have felt terrible if he'd hurt Malfoy any more, Luna was sure it was in reaction to the curse Hermione was under that Neville acted like he was possessed and holding him as he cried confirmed this. Once he trusted her enough she would hear the story behind it but what she really wanted to listen to was the promised explanation from Harry and Hermione – her friends.

Sirius arrived in the château and only Moony holding on to his arm stopped him from making a run for it, there seemed to be people everywhere before he noticed McGonagall smiling at him then his godson and new betrothed held him in a hug.

“Harry James Potter if you don't tell me what the hell is going on right this minute then your godfather is going to deliver you a smack round the head.”

“Relax Sirius, the manhunt is called of and you have been placed in my custody until a trial can be arranged, so if there’s any smacking to be done I will be the one doing it dear godfather. Looks like your coming to stay with me rather than the other way around” Harry’s laughter could be heard in every word.

“Welcome to the Potter Institute of Sorcery and Spells,” Hermione laughed.

Sirius looked to his oldest friend, “Remus what’s going on? Are these two taking the piss?”

“No but every one else is!” the laughter spread as people started getting Remus’s joke, Dean had just thought of a brilliant idea for a t-shirt.

A/N Please review

Chapter 10

Albus Dumbledore had no idea how long he sat alone in the great hall, reconstructing this morning's events in his mind and trying to figure out where it all went so horribly wrong. In a matter of a few moments he'd lost his gold, the brat Potter, half of the current third year and his four most senior members of staff, Albus still couldn't work out how it was done, where did that arse Potter get his information from? Marching into his school as if the little shit owned the place, if he hadn't put a stop to it half the bloody school would have followed Potter out the castle.

Albus had watched the older students wrestle with the prospect of leaving versus exams next year while the younger ones were gathering their courage to stand up in front of everyone in the hall, when he factored in the effect of the two Slytherins standing as well he now considered his estimate of half to be somewhat conservative.

He decided to go and visit Severus in the infirmary; they needed to have a long, serious chat with damage limitation at the top of the agenda.

Poppy watched the headmaster enter the infirmary and had to call on all of her professionalism just to be civil to the man, she more than anyone knew of Harry's injuries and some of the marks on his body had nothing to do with Hogwarts. Unfortunately protocol dictated that she report these matters to the headmaster who dutifully sent the young boy back to his abusers every summer.

Poppy had left the hall before Hannah made her vow and had no idea what had happened since, she was quickly coming to the decision that she could no longer work for this man all on her own.

"Poppy my dear, how is Severus?"

She hid her anger, letting her years of experience keep her from betraying the fact she wanted to strangle this bastard with his own beard but she didn't quite manage the civility, "your pet death eater is missing a hand and an arm just below the elbow, the amount of time

he held it and the ferocity of that vile curse seems to have affected his magical core. Apart from that I'm afraid to say he'll live."

Dumbledore thought he was over the shocks for today but a healer, especially Poppy Pomfrey; being displeased that someone had lived was another blow to the normality of his world.

Poppy wasn't finished yet, "after today I am ashamed to be even associated with Hogwarts under your leadership therefore my resignation will be with the board before the day is out."

Albus was crestfallen, "Et tu, Brute?" he was not above using a little emotional blackmail to get what he wanted, at this point he was not above using any means at his disposal. To late he realised that he'd given information away without having time to formulate a plan to deal with it.

"Who else left then?" Poppy asked.

Albus knew he couldn't hide the facts of this morning, but he just wanted a bit of time to put the proper spin on them, "Minerva, Pomona and Filius all left with Potter and his band of fans."

The healer was elated, it looked like she wasn't the only one to grow a backbone today, "it would appear that you are going to have a busy summer headmaster, interviewing prospective staff members instead of interfering in that boys life. I'll save you a task and wont request a reference – it would probably count against me."

Albus stormed away towards the bed containing Severus only to find his way blocked by a rather large, black auror.

"Can I help you sir?" the deep voice boomed out.

"I'm just here to visit my friend auror, sorry I don't know your name."

"My name is unimportant but the fact that you called this death eater your friend is, this thing just used the torture curse on a young female

student so I would advise you to leave here now before I arrest you for associating with a known criminal.”

Why was nobody showing him the respect he deserved? “I demand your name auror and I will be taking this matter up personally with minister Fudge.”

Shacklebolt just smirked at the old wizard, “Fudge is gone, he resigned this morning and having seen the charges that Madam Bones has in store for you resigning might be contagious.”

Albus tried to bluster and push passed the auror, “I’ll have you know that this is my school and that is a colleague of mine lying th...” the young pink haired auror had activated an emergency portkey and both she and Severus were gone from the castle.

“My partner may be young but she’s almost as smart as she is quick, let me be as honest as I possibly can, the only thing as bad as someone getting their jollies from using the torture curse is the person standing idly watching. The leader of the light left two children to deal with a dark bastard like Snape, that puts you right near the top of my shit list.”

Amelia Bones entered the infirmary with Dobby and couldn’t fail to notice her auror going eyeball to eyeball with Dumbledore, she knew Shack could never win a magical fight against the old wizard, she also knew he had no intention of letting it become a magical contest. If Albus had even twitched Shack would have started breaking his bones, Dumbledore had made a serious miscalculation letting the physically powerful younger man get so close and Shack was like a magnificent black mamba ready to strike. She almost wished she could let him.

It was just beginning to dawn on Albus that he might be in a spot of trouble here and, despite his better judgement; his hand was instinctively inching towards his wand when he heard the voice behind him, “everything ok here Shack?”

The auror’s eyes never left Dumbledore as he gave Amelia his report, “all under control boss, this gentleman was insistent that he see his

friend so Tonks removed the death eater to our secure location. Oh and I'm being reported to minister Fudge."

Dumbledore whirled round to face Amelia, "why was I not informed that Cornelius had resigned? As head of the Wizengamot it is my right to ..."

Amelia decided to kick this old bastard where it really hurt, she had considered kneeing him in the nuts but felt trampling all over his pride would cause more pain. "Can it Albus, you have been suspended from the Wizengamot pending the criminal investigation regarding your dealings with Lord Potter."

"This is preposterous!" Albus roared.

Amelia Bones was the epitome of cool; "we have the Potter will bearing your signature as a witness, a will that you blatantly and illegally ignored. We have records from Gringotts showing you taking a serious amount of gold from the Potter vaults and move it to a muggle bank before it made it's way back to another vault at Gringotts under your control. If I can implicate you in any way with the debacle that denied Sirius Black a trial I'm prepared to take a witches vow that I'll make sure you personally become acquainted with his former cell. Now I don't believe I've left any room for ambiguity here, simply put you're in deep shit."

Amelia gave this a minute to sink in before continuing, "Lord Potter believes it's in no one's interest to allow this to become a long drawn out affair with the media crawling all over it, he has offered to drop the charges if you resign from the Wizengamot and as Supreme Mugwump. Your alternative is to fight the charges and risk losing being headmaster and even your freedom."

Albus was so depressed the goblins had found his secret stash that he magically resigned both positions there and then. Amelia had only added the Supreme Mugwump as a bargaining chip and would have let him retain the position as long as he resigned from the Wizengamot, she beamed a smile at Shackbolt as the old man shuffled out the infirmary.

-oOoOo-

Ronald Weasley was in a greenhouse alone, he wasn't supposed to be alone but none of his fellow Gryffindors, any of the puffs or Professor Sprout had turned up yet. This gave the redhead time to figure out who was to blame for the severe down turn his life had just taken; Ron tried to put the events into some kind of order.

Friday night he was doing well with Hermione, playing up the injured leg and wining lots of sympathy. Ron's job was to get Hermione out of her knickers thus forcing Harry to go out with Ginny; the twins were helping with advice and even a book though it now seemed likely that only potions would work.

Saturday the pair walked into the great hall with Loony, insulted Gryffindor and announced that squib Neville was a great wizard.

Harry snogging Hermione in front of all the Weasleys was not a memory Ron wished to recall and then they had disappeared for the entire weekend.

Watching as Hermione smiled at the greasy git had almost required a change of underwear as he thought 'this is the girl I was going to try it on with?' As Snape lost his appendages, Ron lost any and all interest in Miss Granger, even he wasn't stupid enough to mess with power like that.

When Percy took his wand Ron had already decided his arse was not leaving his nice comfortable Hogwarts wooden bench, being around Potter could get you killed. If the family wanted in on the Potter fortune then some other berk could be the patsy, he was too young to die, and inexperienced to boot!

Unfortunately for Ron experience chose that moment to make an appearance, "aw, has the little lion been left all on his own? I know how it feels to be alone but it doesn't have to be that way."

Ron found himself grabbed by the ears and pulled towards a face that appeared to engulf him, within seconds he was sure his attacker was

trying to remove his appendix orally by use of her tongue and a tremendous amount of applied suction.

He wasn't certain but his light-headedness could be caused by lack of oxygen to his brain due to not being able to breath for what felt like thirty minutes. Whatever the cause it was a dizzy Ron who was delighted that his mouth was suddenly free from obstructions and intruders, allowing air to once again flow to his lungs. He wasn't so delighted as the grip on his ears increased and his head was forced southwards, just what the hell was going on here.

It was a worried Fred and George who eventually found a dishevelled Ron, making his way along the corridor by holding on to the wall, his ears sticking out almost at right angles from his head.

“Where have you been Ron, you missed lunch,” Fred inquired.

Ron shuddered as he croaked his answered, “no I didn't”

George wouldn't let him away without knowing what was going on, “spill it Ron.”

Ron for some reason had difficulty speaking so the twins had to play the yes / no guessing game.

“Have you been attacked?”

Nod of head

‘Are you injured?’

Shake of head

“Did you get a good look at who attacked you?”

Full body shudders but a definite nod of the head in there somewhere.

“Was it a wizard?”

Venomous shake of the head

“A witch attacked you?”

Nod of the head

“What did she do to you?”

Ron hung his head in shame

In desperation Fred asked, “Did you get into her knickers?”

“What knickers,” croaked Ron

“Way to go bro!” exclaimed George, “And do we know the lucky girl?”

A nod followed by another croak, “Millicent Bulstrode.”

Fred put his arm around his young brothers shoulder, “sorry Ron, listen this attack really needs to be reported to Dumbledore.”

Shake of the head followed by a faint, “can’t.”

George was very sympathetic, “Listen there’s no need to be embarrassed, we understand.”

Ron shook his head again, “can’t, am seeing her again tonight.”

The Weasley twins lost their lunch all over the corridor, as they were barfing up their breakfast as well the idea of the puking pastel was born, with the promise that Ron would be the test subject until it was perfected and maybe after as well.

Poppy was packing when the oddest-looking elf she had ever seen appeared next to her. “Excuse me ma’am but the castle is telling Dobby that you is leaving.”

This was new thought Poppy, a house elf asking her a question after talking to the castle, "yes I am, I can't work here any longer."

"Would ma'am consider working for the great Harry Potter? Madam's friends have already agreed and you always take such good care of my master and mistress."

This was really new, she'd just been offered a job by a house elf, "Does Harry know you're making this offer?"

Dobby stood up straighter, "I know master Harry very well and the castle is worried headmaster whickers is going to do something to keep you here, my first job is to help master Harry's friends and family. You have been kinder to my master than almost anyone else in the castle so I will help you get away before whickers can use his wand."

Poppy was worried now, she had often suspected Albus was not as light as he tried to appear and, if she could believe this elf the castle itself was warning her against him. She looked around at her just started packing when the little elf seemed to read her mind.

"The Hogwarts elves will pack all your belongings and they will be brought to your new home, please let's just leave now."

Poppy had made up her mind, even if she didn't get a job with Harry Potter it would seem prudent to make like the proverbial shepherd and get the flock out of here. "Ok Dobby, I'm ready."

Seconds later they were gone.

-oOoOo-

Molly Weasley was on an emotional roller coaster, every time she thought of Harry with that mudblood witch she was depressed yet at the same time extremely angry that it wasn't her Ginny. Since receiving an owl from her daughter on Friday describing what happened in the hall and that Harry and Hermione were together the

Weasley matriarch had been even more impossible to live with than usual.

When she read in Saturday's Prophet that the brown haired bitch was now his betrothed her anger had been so bad, and so loud that even the garden gnomes had packed their bags and legged it as far away from the burrow as possible.

This morning's Quibbler had effectively ended Harry's relationship with Dumbledore and his ability to influence Lord Potter's decisions on anything, including choice of partner. Molly was many things but she wasn't as stupid as people took her for, attempting to interfere with a betrothal of the head of an ancient and noble family would cost at least your freedom but more likely your life.

She was going to have to be subtle, Molly could do subtle, so Ginny wasn't going to be the primary wife but as a pureblood Weasley she could bring a lot to the house of Potter. Also as a Weasley she would easily outbreed the mudblood and Harry would always treat his children equally, yes there was more than one way to skin a Kneazle.

She was just congratulating herself on her plan when Percy's owl entered through the open window and presented her with the latest developments from Hogwarts, Molly was reading the letter until she got to Percy's boastful description of how he saved the family honour by not allowing the Weasleys to betray Hogwarts and leave with that upstart Potter.

Molly was beyond angry, her magic was boiling and she needed an outlet to release her famous temper on, she saw Percy's owl and her wand was in her hand in an instant.

Post owls are incredibly intelligent animals and Hermes recognised the danger and tried for the window, a reductor curse forced an emergency course change, five reducto's later and the poor bird couldn't see a thing for dust and flying debris, being able to feel the heat of the flame curse was an entirely different matter as the terrified owl found the staircase and headed up, anywhere that didn't contain this maniacal human was all Hermes was hoping to achieve.

Molly was firing the flame curse blindly into the dust determined to cook that bloody bird when she heard the ceiling give a loud groan and creak. The chubby witch suddenly realised just what she was doing and performed an emergency apparition out to the garden, she was in such a hurry that she spliced herself, leaving her hair behind.

The now bald chubby witch watched as her house mirrored her dreams; it collapsed in on itself and burned to a crisp, leaving nothing but cinders and ashes. To make matters worse the bloody owl shot out an upstairs window just as the house was coming down.

The ministry had recorded the intense spell work and thought that a departmental head's residence was under attack, four aurors apparated in to find Molly rolling on the grass while kicking, screaming and punching the ground like a toddler in a tantrum, she was immediately portkeyed to St Mungo's and admitted to the spell damage ward while they attempted to diagnose what the attackers had done to the poor witch.

-oOoOo-

As the kids sat around the pool Dean was working on his t-shirt design, he'd got the mock up done on paper and was now studiously applying his creation to a white t-shirt. Unbeknown to Dean this was drawing him far more female attention than his phoney posing and cheap chat-up lines ever did. The girls were noticing Dean was not bad looking and talented to, he had just been moved to the top of the rather short list of eligible boys at the Potter Institute.

While this was taking place a meeting of the adults with Harry and Hermione was in full session on the terrace, Harry was doing what he did best, making it up as he went along. Harry had learned to trust his instincts and follow where they led, the difference now was that he had Hermione in his head filling in the blanks and keeping him out of too much trouble.

“Our original premise was to hire tutors for four students and cover a wide range of subjects, as our numbers have increased I would like to establish what courses the institute will be able to offer it's students

and who else do we have to employ. We also need to examine the actual building and determine if it's suitable for teaching the courses we want to offer. Pomona I would like to offer you the headship of the institute, you are a brilliant teacher who always puts the needs of her students first and won't think twice about telling Hermione and I if we screw up when trying to get this place up and running. Minerva I would really appreciate your help on the administrative side of running a school but I want to stress here and now there will never be a house system at our school."

His former teachers were wondering just where this version of Harry Potter had come from; they'd never seen him so assertive.

"We will also need your input into what equipment and furniture we'll need for the institute, we're building classrooms from scratch so use your experience to design the rooms to be fit for purpose, money should be no object but we really don't need solid gold desks." Hermione cracking jokes was something else her former professors were going to have a hard time getting used to.

Minerva had a question niggling at her brain so decided to ask it, "Miss Granger, what did you say to Pomona to convince her to take the job?"

Hermione just smiled, "when she asked about our greenhouses I told her we didn't need any because of the climate, I also mentioned that the soil around here is volcanic and, as everyone knows, with the application of some dragon dung compost these are probably the best growing conditions to be found anywhere."

"Are you sure you want me to be head?" Pomona asked?

"Absolutely!" answered Harry "I think we should be honest here, Minerva and Filius are brilliant teachers but not the leader we need especially starting from scratch." Both nodded to show there were no hard feelings and they agreed with his assessment.

"Well I would be happy to teach Herbology and Potions, I think the subjects should be more closely linked anyway."

Filius put in his two Knuts worth, “like Pomona I would be delighted to teach charms and runes, I would like to include wards in the syllabus as well.”

Minerva indicated that she would teach transfiguration and arithmancy as everyone turned to Remus who appeared to be daydreaming before giving a shudder and rejoining them.

Remus was day dreaming, he was gazing at this new Pomona Sprout before him, her usual attire of old dark soil covered robes and beat-up hat had been replaced with a light blue set that did wonders for her. He was also guessing that she wore many layers of cloths under those old robes as her ‘Molly Weasley’ figure had slimed down drastically. Considering that summer in the Scottish Highlands consisted of the last week of May and the first week of June, the layering of cloths was understandable for someone who spent most of her day outside the castle. With no plants to pull her hair all over the place Remus was coming to the conclusion that Pomona was an attractive woman who was at most ten years older than him.

His glance shifted to the beautiful Emma Granger and could see the woman Hermione would become, how did these Potter men manage it? In Remus’s opinion Lily Evans was the best witch he had ever met, they had spent some time together over the years as both were the Gryffindor prefects, and he had thought his friend James was the luckiest man alive when he started dating her. All the marauders had fancied Lily but knew James was besotted with the girl, as soon as they started dating James had confessed that this was the one he was going to marry and not one of his friends doubted that would be the case.

Now Harry had a witch that could rival Lily and was going to marry her in a matter of weeks, Remus couldn’t find it in his heart to wish them anything but happiness, if anyone deserved some joy in their lives it was Harry and Hermione.

He then thought about his former head of house and the strange relationship between her and Filius who seemed to follow her every action and word like some lovesick puppy. The image of Minerva in

leather leading Filius around by a leash just popped into his head and would require to be bleached or obliviated later, the involuntary full body shudder the image produced drew him back to the present where he realised everyone was watching him.

“I’ve been in contact with the Italian ministry and their syllabus would appear to be a bit more demanding than Hogwarts” the former heads of house looked at Remus in disbelief, “apparently the purebloods were finding some parts of the curriculum difficult so the ministry had it altered to prevent them being proven to be magically inferior to the mixed and first generation witches and wizards.”

Pomona just shook her head, “why am I not surprised?”

Minerva was starting to see things more clearly now that her Dumbledore blinkers were removed, “and Albus just stood back and let them? Are you saying that Hogwarts is producing sub-standard graduates?”

“Yes” answered Remus, “compared to Europe and the USA, the purebloods tend to stay in Britain where their power base is but the others are forced to move abroad or into the muggle world to find meaningful work. They get there only to find gaps in their education because of bigotry in Britain.”

“Do you mean to tell me after paying all that money for Hermione’s years at Hogwarts she would have been unable to find work while receiving a sub standard education that would deny her opportunities abroad?” Dan Granger was angry.

“The only answer I can give you is Yes, but as Lady Potter she will have a lot less problems though some will always look down on her, as they do Harry and just about everyone here with the exception of Minerva.” Remus was on a roll about his least favourite subject; “Sirius is classes as a blood traitor, me as a dark creature, Pomona and Harry as mixed blood while Filius is mixed race.”

‘Why are you a dark creature Remus?’ Emma asked.

It was Hermione who answered for the embarrassed man, "Remus is a werewolf mum, that means once a month he drinks a potion and curls up in front of the fire in his wolf form. As a precaution he always locks himself away from everyone and turning into an animal is something both Harry and I wish to learn, both Minerva and Sirius have animal forms."

Sirius was quick on the up-take and had seen where Hermione was steering this conversation, tying werewolf transformation to animagus was not correct but if it helped the Grangers come to terms with his friend then he was all for it and Padfoot made an appearance.

Minerva also gave credence to the deception by pouncing on the table in her cat form and prancing over to the Grangers.

"I'm really touched people but there will be no lies here, what Hermione forgot to mention is that while Minerva and Sirius can change their form at will I have no control over mine, the potion I take allows me to retain my mind otherwise I become a beast. I was bitten as a child and have had to live with this most of my life."

Dan got up and made his way over to Remus and held his hand out, "pleased to know you Remus."

Emma thought if Hermione could hug him so could she, so she did, "thanks for looking after these two for us."

It was with moisture in his eyes that Remus continued, "Thanks everybody, now I would like to teach defence and history of magic if that would be ok."

Hermione had a smirk on her face, "now if we can convince Dr Granger and Dr Granger to teach muggle studies that gives us nine core subjects, I don't think we could teach care in this environment and I won't even consider divination. If any students show sign of being a seer then we could reconsider."

"Now here's the big, big question, do we stick with the students we have or accept new admissions? I would like everyone's opinion on it

and unlike Albus I would like it to be your opinion.” Harry glanced around the table and waited for their first answer.

Pomona decided if she was going to be head then she should get her opinion in first, “I think we should look to take more students but younger than our current intake, this way we build up to OWLs and NEWTs. Some of the younger Hogwarts students may be interested and I would be delighted to offer the new pupils an alternative to Hogwarts.”

Minerva was smiling, “I agree with the headmistress, I know of at least one Weasley that was desperate to follow us here.”

“There will be no Weasleys attending the Potter Institute!”

The venom in Harry’s voice shocked the ex Hogwarts staff even more than the statement though Dan Granger’s follow on comment led them to believe there was information that was personal, and it must be bad judging by both reactions.

“Are you sure Harry,” asked Dan innocently, “there’s a lovely cliff here just begging for a certain red head to be flung off it.”

Emma had seen a whole new side to her husband in Gringotts and thought Dan was more than capable of killing the boy who tried to drug their daughter for sex, shit she’d help kill the bastard herself.

Remus signalled to a bemused Sirius that this would be discussed later before adding his opinion, “is there any way to get a hold of the list of children down to attend Hogwarts this summer?”

Minerva sighed, “it was in my old office, I wish I’d thought to lift it.”

Dobby chose that moment to appear with Poppy and pulled the list out of one of his precious pockets, “sorry Miss Minnie but you went and forgot this when you left the castle.”

The thought of McGonagall as Minnie Mouse cracked Harry and Hermione up, "Dobby you are simply the best!" Harry told his beaming friend as Poppy was welcomed to the group.

-oOoOo-

Draco Malfoy was in trouble, the beating he received at the hands of Longbottom and the mudblood destroying Snape had left him powerless in Slytherin, add to that he hadn't heard from his parents despite the fact he had been sending owls daily since Friday.

Pomfrey had healed him pretty quickly but his godfather didn't look to be leaving the infirmary any time soon, he was going to have to send another owl and not looking forward to explaining to his father how Snape was taken down by a mudblood, at least Longbottom was a proper wizard.

Even Crabbe and Goyle were distancing themselves from him and he would have to keep his wits about him to make it to the end of the week unscathed, thankfully it was end of term on Friday.

-oOoOo-

Snape awoke in a cell and immediately noticed the bandages where his arms ended prematurely; he was going to rip that mudblood's throat out with his teeth.

The ex-potion master felt fear run down his spine, normally when he was this angry he could feel his magic fizzle around his body but there was nothing happening. It was as if there was no magic in his body, trying to raise his occlumency shields brought another shock and a cold sweat to his forehead; he was like an open book.

Snape had spent years perfecting his shields and had reached the point where he could even neutralise the effects of Veritaserum, Dumbledore had better get a move on and arrange his release before the aurors started questioning him.

The death eater was unaware of Dumbledore's new status and that Amelia was en route to his cell with Kingsley, Tonks and a good supply of truth serum.

-oOoOo-

The meeting broke up with Harry and Hermione heading through the château towards their friends and the pool, Dean had finished the t-shirt and held it up for their approval.

Harry put his hand on the shirt and pushed some magic into it, "now that's what I call a t-shirt!" Harry proclaimed.

The rest of them apparently agreed as they stood in awe at the now animated design, showing the Hogwarts express with its wheels turning and smoke belching out the stack. Dumbledore was the driver and as he leaned out the engine a large X appeared over the picture with the words 'taking the P.I.S.S.' superimposed over the design. The back of the shirt proudly proclaimed Potter Institute for Sorcery and Spells.

After Harry cast a duplication spell the unofficial uniform of the institute was born, it would turn heads in Diagon Alley this summer.

-oOoOo-

Albus sat at his desk that was covered in paperwork Minerva would normally have taken care of; it had always been the headmaster's responsibility until he had gladly passed it on to his deputy.

Something caught the attention of the old man and a slight twinkle was back in his eyes for the first time since breakfast. Potter's oath prevented the brat from being a student at Hogwarts, but didn't preclude him from being a contestant.

A/N Please Review

Chapter 11

The eight that sat down that night to hear what was actually happening were a sombre group, the Grangers and Remus knew some of it but Harry and Hermione had promised full disclosure tonight. Neville and Luna were fascinated at the two years of extra knowledge and enraged with the Weasleys use of potions while Sirius was compiling a list of those who were going to pay for mistreating his godson.

When they reached the part about meeting with James and Lily, Sirius was in bits. The thought of his godson not wanting to return had the old dog in tears.

When Harry explained the creation of horcruxes Remus felt ill, he knew just how deep into the dark arts one had to delve even to find information on these abominations.

The group cheered up considerably when Hermione informed them that two were already dealt with while a third was safe at Gringotts in their vault and they knew the location, as well as the protection around the others.

“Our plan is to train over the summer while going on treasure hunts with Sirius and Remus to collect and destroy these things.” Harry was waiting for questions and Dan didn’t disappoint.

“I’m really glad to see you taking help when you attempt to remove these items but how are you going to destroy them?”

“The Basilisk in the chamber of secrets has plenty more fangs than the one it sunk into me, one of the horcruxes is presently stored in Hogwarts as well so we have to figure out an excuse to get us back in there to collect it and harvest the Basilisk.”

Neville and Luna were sitting holding hands as the blond asked, “can we stay here this summer and train with you? I don’t think my dad would mind too much.”

“All taken care of, your father and Neville’s gran will be spending some time here over the holidays. We start tomorrow at seven and the first few days will be murder!” Hermione was thinking back and remembering the pain of muscles protesting every movement.

“Remus got us some presents so we wouldn’t have to be totally useless in a fight, could we train with you as well?” Emma’s question had stumped the teens but they couldn’t figure a reason why they shouldn’t.

“For the first ten days or so we will be concentrating solely on getting our bodies fitter with perhaps some unarmed combat, your daughter’s signature move is taking out peoples knee caps. She figured out that men tend to concentrate on protecting certain other parts of their anatomy leaving the knees an easy target, it certainly worked with that goblin.” Harry was glancing admiringly at his now blushing betrothed.

“Is all this physical training really necessary?” Sirius moaned.

“Spoken like a true pureblood Sirius, my beautiful betrothed here could whip your arse in combat, with or without a wand. Our training kept us alive against the best that Voldemort could throw at us.”

Sirius just huffed in disbelief before Remus skilfully laid his trap, “I’ve got fifty gallons on the beautiful brunette!”

Both Dan and Emma offered bets on Hermione beating Sirius, like Remus they had seen their daughter in action.

Sirius knew he was trapped into a contest he couldn’t win, even when he beat Hermione where was the kudos in winning against a fourteen year old girl.

He stood up and Hermione walked towards him with her hand held out to shake, Sirius realised his mistake as he was flying through the air, landing heavily on his back before finding Hermione’s shoe in gentle contact with his throat while his wand was behind the young witches ear. In less than five seconds she had disabled, disarmed

and had him in a position where he would be deceased if she so wished, and there was nothing he could do about it.

Remus came over and helped his embarrassed friend off the floor, “don’t worry about it Sirius she would have done the same to me, you should have seen them in Gringotts taking out seven armed goblins without a wand being drawn.”

“Purebloods are inherently lazy, they will use either their magic or call on a house elf to accomplish every task, in any kind of prolonged fight our higher fitness levels will give us a major advantage. Death eaters are used to their victims either fleeing or freezing through fear, when you overcome the intimidation and fight back it becomes obvious they’re not that powerful or skilful. It doesn’t take a lot of magical skill to torture and murder muggles, especially when your favourite curses are unforgivables.”

Harry’s words made sense to purebloods Neville, Luna and Sirius; they would recall them often in the days that followed when they felt like lying down and resting.

Hermione laid out the rest of their plans, “the students are portkeying into the apparition point in Diagon Alley on Friday, and the staff are staying to get the institute up and running before September. Our plan is to recover both hidden horcruxes that are available to us at the moment before our wedding, giving us a break before we figure out how to sneak into Hogwarts.”

“Ok I know I’m not at my best just now, I’ve just been beat up by a young girl for Merlin’s sake, but I could have sworn I heard you say ‘wedding’ in there somewhere.”

“Hermione and I are getting married on my birthday, as the last in line of a noble and ancient house the law allows this. We were getting married on my birthday before we came back in time and my wife-to-be absolutely refuses to wait another two years. The wedding will be held here and of course you are all invited.”

Sirius whirled on the Grangers and Remus, “you knew about this? You’re ok with this?”

It was Emma who answered the concerned godfather, “in their reality they’ve been best friends for five years and been dating officially for one of them, the bond they share is more intimate than anything we know and their love for each other is beyond measure. We are fighting a war here and these two for whatever reason are in the eye of the storm. Given their position I would like to think that Dan and I would do the same thing.” Dan leaned over and kissed his wife lending credence to her assumption.

“We know why Harry and I are in the centre of this, a prophecy placed him there and I refuse to leave his side, dark lord be damned.”

Harry told them the prophecy before turning to Neville, “two boys matched that profile which is why our parents made their agreement, I could have grown up with a brother instead of that obnoxious, obese bastard of a cousin and for that reason more than any other I’ll never forgive Dumbledore.”

The three men were raging and all talking over each other.

‘Knew all this time”

“No training whatsoever”

“Wring his scrawny neck”

In every case the phrase “manipulative old bastard” was used liberally and repeatedly.

Neville had just kissed Luna goodnight, they were standing outside her bedroom door, neither wanting to let the other go and were oblivious to the world around them which is why they both nearly jumped out their socks when Harry placed his hands on their shoulders.

“I’m so glad you two got together before we had to tell that story, I was worried it would affect how you felt about one another. We also want you both to stand with Hermione and I when we get married next month because by the time we went to the ministry that night we were as close as family, none of us have any siblings so we all kind of adopted each other with you becoming our brother and sister. That’s why we reacted the way we did in the corridor Luna, you’re our sister and nobody messes with our little sis! Both Hermione and I love you very much and the Christmas we all spent together at your house is the best I’ve ever had.”

Hermione had joined what had become a group hug though it was a tearful Luna who spoke, “I always wanted a brother and sister.”

Hermione answered, “That’s what we all wanted Luna but different circumstances prevented our wishes coming true, we were four lonely people who each found a partner that gave us the strength to reach out to others. Neville has very similar values to Harry and there’s not an ounce of deception in his body. We know you have a hard time trusting people Luna but we got beyond that once and I now have the chance to get to know my best friend and little sis a lot earlier than before, I’m really looking forward to it.”

Luna had one arm round Hermione while the other encircled Neville, “I don’t know what it is but something is telling me to trust everyone here, I’m sure it’s not a Crumple-Horned Snorkack because they left when you held me in the corridor. Apparently kindness and love drives them away, its no wonder daddy could never find them.”

They all looked at Luna before the young witch burst out laughing, to the astonishment of Harry and Hermione and the bemusement of Neville the blond had banished her mythical creatures with a joke – she trusted them!

“Ok sis, you and I have a date with some shops on Saturday and we’ll drag our men folk along to carry the bags. If you boys think our exercises are tough just wait till you see Miss Lovegood and Miss Granger shop.”

“We’re in serious trouble now Nev,” Harry joked, “listen seven am on the beach tomorrow and I’m betting you hate us by eight! All joking aside this really does help and you two were awesome fighting by our side, it was a stupid mistake that got Hermione cursed so we now put our enemies down and they don’t get back up without medical attention.”

Hugs and kisses all round followed with neither Neville nor Luna commenting on the fact that Harry and Hermione entered the same room.

-oOoOo-

“Is it ok to hate you yet Harry?”

“Another twenty minutes yet Nev, I said after eight and Hermione claimed before then. We can’t let her win again or the insurable know-it-all might resurface.”

Both girls were shoulder to shoulder with their boyfriends and knew that the banter was in jest; as soon as they could get their lungs working properly jibes would be returned when breathing allowed.

Emma listened to the exchange between the boys with a smile on her face; she now understood where Hermione’s newfound sense of humour came from. Emma thought she was a prime candidate for a heart attack as she jogged along wet sand at the water’s edge, occasional waves washing over her feet and inviting her to stop and use the sand for it’s original purpose, lying on while tanning.

Emma looked at her husband jogging beside her and could have smacked him, her legs felt as if they were turning to jelly yet Dan seemed to be running effortlessly and she could feel how happy he was through their wonderful bracelets.

Dan couldn’t remember being happier, he awoke this morning with a beautiful naked woman in his arms and was now jogging along a private beach with her at his side. Daniel Granger could safely say that he enjoyed dentistry but he adored his new life, new wife, new

daughter and soon to be son-in-law. He had the Mediterranean Sea on one side and his gorgeous wife on the other, his body might be sore later but at the moment Dan was feeling no pain.

Sirius was in trouble; the exercise he had done was already more than at any other time in his life. His vacation in Azkaban may have left him physically weaker but had equipped him with a will of iron which was the only thing keeping him upright.

His casual defeat at the hands of Hermione had cemented his view that this was something he simply must take part in, they had started jogging along the sandy beach then returned via the wet sand. A few circuits later and he was dead on his feet, the thought of a hot shower, large breakfast and spending the day lying beside the pool trying to change his skin colour from grey was more than he had to look forward to in over a decade and this kept him moving.

The cliff signalled the end of their beach and Harry called a halt, everyone was in need of a breather so he gave them ten minutes before calling on Dobby. His little friend started handing out small bags and the all felt better after the elvin energy drink did its work.

“We have another hour to exercise but we’re going to try something different now, each bag should contain a watch, please put it on and follow me.” Harry waded into the sea before gathering everyone around him, “Set your watches for one hour then take out the piece of gillyweed that’s in your bag, this will cause a slight pain for the first minute but will then allow you to breath underwater for an hour. Stay together and plan on finishing up at the other end of the beach when the time is up.”

Emma ate the gillyweed and thought the pain wasn’t to bad until she realised she couldn’t breath, she was starting to panic when Harry pushed her head under the water.

Harry ate his last after ensuring they were all ok, their were a lot of excited people under the water and he led off for the strangest and most wonderful game of ‘follow the leader’ any of them had ever played. Harry and Hermione could still communicate through their rings and managed to keep everyone more or less together. The fish

and plant life were a lot more interesting and certainly more diverse than the bottom of the Black Lake in February. They noticed Neville and Luna slip away for an underwater kiss, they deliberately didn't notice mum and dad doing the same, Sirius and Remus were giving that experience a wide berth until accompanied by a female of their choice.

As the hour was almost up the group moved into shallower water and only had to stand up when the effects wore off. It was a very excited group who made their way back up the cliff towards showers and breakfast, only Harry had experienced this before but all wanted to do it again. The fact that they had just spent an hour swimming and using just about every muscle in their body was forgotten in their enjoyment of the time spent underwater.

Harry and Hermione were studying in their library for exams they planned to take; between their shared knowledge and Tom's library in Harry's head they would have no problems. Their objective was to knock Tom Riddle off the leader board for most OWLs and NEWTs, they planned to sit all the exams he had with the addition of Muggle Studies.

Neither regarded this as cheating as they would never need to use these results to get a career, the Potter name and fortune pretty much guaranteed every door in the magical world was open to them. It was one in the eye for Riddle and Dumbledore, as Potter Institute students would hold the record. Before the end of August they would be married, emancipated and a fully qualified witch and wizard removing any legal wrangling options of being underage used against them.

They were disturbed when Dobby appeared, "begging your pardon but the elves have told me that Bones is in Malfoy Manor and not happy, she is demanding they tell her who this mysterious new master is. I think she was at Gringotts first and that added to her bad mood."

"Could you bring her here please Dobby?" Harry asked.

He was back minutes later with a clearly raging Amelia and two aurors, "Lord Potter I demand to know what you're playing at!"

"We're actually studying potions since we had such a crappy professor for the subject, why don't you sit down, we'll have a cup of tea and get whatever's troubling you out in the open, I'm not really good at guessing games." They both had a fair idea what had got Amelia so worked up but were waiting to see how much she knew.

Brutus immediately arrived with tea and soft drinks as they slowly marked their places in the books they had been studying.

Amelia took a sip of tea while both aurors stood alertly behind her, "Snape sang his head off giving us more information than I would have believed possible leading to the filling of warrants for the arrest and freezing of assets of some very high profile death eaters. You can imagine our shock when we found that eleven had fled the country while one was a prisoner of the goblins. An even greater shock was that in every case their vaults had been emptied but not by them. I would like to know what you can tell me about this situation?"

Harry grabbed Hermione, "you are an absolute genius!" he proclaimed before administering a kiss that only Amelia's embarrassed cough eventually stopped.

He looked at the woman before asking, "I'm assuming you trust these two or they wouldn't be here?" Amelia's slight nod was all the answer he required, "the richest death eaters created a method for Voldemort to have full access to their vaults, we wished to deny him these considerable resources and hopefully some followers as well. We legally emptied their vaults except for one Knut and a note written by my brilliant betrothed. It basically said Tom was unhappy with them and would show his displeasure at the earliest opportunity. We had hoped some of them would flee but expected the rest to come after us which is why we, along with Hermione's parents are here."

Kingsley couldn't help himself, he burst out laughing, "sorry boss but that is bloody brilliant and did more damage to the bastards than we could."

“Your auror is right, they would have been dragged through the court proclaiming their innocence while spreading gold about like dragon dung fertiliser trying to cultivate the result they wanted. This way their fleeing the country is as good as an admission of guilt and they can be tried in absentia with no untoward influence being brought to bear.” Hermione added.

Amelia nodded in understanding, “you are of course right and the trials will go a lot smoother for our side without Malfoy spreading his golden influence around, I’m only disappointed because I wanted some of their ill gotten gains to bolster the auror department.”

At that Dobby appeared with a chequebook Gringotts had given them, “this little bugger now knows what I’m going to do before me!” Harry’s laughter took any sting out of the remark and Dobby was overjoyed, to anticipate their master’s needs was a house elves greatest achievement.

Harry handed Amelia a cheque and she tried but failed not to react to the amount it was made out for, she handed it to Kingsley who fared no better than his boss but it was the pink haired auror peeking over his shoulder who took the gold medal.

“Merlin’s beard! Five million galleons? Holy shit I didn’t know there even was that much gold.”

Amelia though was all business, “Lord Potter, before accepting this I would like to ask what you hope to gain from this donation.”

“All I ask is that it’s put to the best possible use in the auror department, I wouldn’t dare to suggest I knew what that was. I have something to tell you and a request, neither of which have any bearing on that cheque. My name is Potter, not Malfoy!”

She nodded for him to continue.

“We knew the death eaters would need money fast and couldn’t really go out onto the streets selling their wears so we came to an arrangement with Gringotts and bought everything. Some of those

items are bound to be dark and we didn't want them appearing in the general wizarding populace, you have my word that every single item will be checked and anything dark destroyed."

Amelia couldn't quite contain the shudder that ran through her at the thought of some of those items in the wrong hands, "I think that's a very sensible solution and a great public service."

Hermione's mischievous side surfaced again, "we actually bought the items with their own money at well below market price."

Shack was again laughing, "these two could put us out of a job boss and that cheque be put towards our retirement fund, taking out Snape was great work but this again is bloody brilliant."

Amelia could see the next bit was costing Harry so she asked him to continue.

"I'm assuming Snape gave you enough information to arrest Dumbledore but I would like you to sit on that for now and offer ministerial support to the planed tournament scheduled for Hogwarts."

Harry could see the expressions changing so pushed on, "my number one priority is to take down Riddle and granting those requests will go a long way to achieving that aim. I want Dumbledore dealt with probably more than you do but while that old bastard sits scheming and planning world domination Riddle fires off unforgivables like the psychotic megalomaniac he is. Which one do you think we should deal with first? Dumbledore wont run and hide because he's too proud to think he'll ever get caught while Riddle killed his father and grandparents when he turned seventeen."

Hermione continued, "We will be letting the old fart think he's manipulating us whereas he'll be doing exactly what we want, taking out Dumbledore first might push any fence sitters into Riddle's camp and that is something we definitely don't want."

“We need to be clear here, you’re not asking for Dumbledore to get special treatment, it’s just the order in which we deal with people that concerns you both.” Amelia wanted no chance of misunderstandings developing.

“That’s exactly right,” said Harry, “I want Dumbledore in Azkaban for the rest of his life but I need Riddle dead so I can live mine.”

Amelia glanced at Shack who gave the slightest of nods so the plan was approved, the fact that she was in total agreement with Harry’s assessment that Riddle was by far the greater danger was the sole reason for her decision, Amelia wasn’t Fudge and not for sale.

“This leads us on to another problem that none of us could have foreseen, in every case the death eaters have fled and abandoned their children who are presently attending Hogwarts. We need to reach a decision by Friday on what to do with them but I fear most are headed for an orphanage.” The reaction of the two teens shocked Amelia; these were death eater kids most of whom had tried to make their time at Hogwarts miserable.

“That’s not going to happen Amelia, Riddle is a product of an orphanage so that idea can be discounted immediately. If you can keep Dumbledore away from us we would like to go to Hogwarts on Thursday and meet with them individually, we will make them an alternative offer to an orphanage and meet all expenses.” Harry was again making it up as he went along but he knew he couldn’t put someone in an orphanage, not even Draco.

“I would like these two to accompany you if that would be ok, neither have any time for Dumbledore and will keep him away from you under my orders.”

Hermione hesitated before replying, “as long as any extra curricular activities we engage in remain between the five people present in this room, again you have my guarantee we won’t break any laws.”

It was an intrigued Madam Bones who agreed, thanked them for their hospitality and decided she wouldn’t miss Thursday so invited herself

along as well. She had a feeling this might be a once in a lifetime opportunity.

As soon as they left Harry turned to his betrothed, "Help!"

She just laughed, "surely you know by now I would have an idea and I can't wait to see Draco's expression when we tell him."

Her idea had Harry howling with laughter, now if they could get past Dumbledore and visit the chamber and room of requirements they could have almost all their business done before their wedding.

-oOoOo-

Ginny Weasley was not enjoying the final week of term in Hogwarts, she knew her family was poor and had used her family's friendship with Harry to counter some of the worst quips aimed in her direction by her peers. Now that friendship was publicly over they were merciless in their verbal attacks, Harry calling the twins bullies had also curtailed their adventures as no one laughed at their pranks anymore, only consoling the victims. Ron was walking about as if his head was up his arse and Percy was just Percy, the pompous prat had ruined her life when he pulled her wand from her hand and didn't give a shit.

Yes it was safe to say the Weasleys were not having a good time and she was on her way to an unused classroom where her father had called an emergency family meeting, Ginny had a premonition that this was not good news.

Her father and four brothers were already seated by the time she arrived so they started right away.

"I've called everyone here today because things have really taken a turn for the worse lately, the Burrow has been completely destroyed and your mother is in St Mungo's undergoing treatment to determine what happened. We will have to live in a tent I've managed to borrow for the foreseeable future, combined with the news of Harry's betrothal to the mudblood I'm afraid the family can't wait any longer but must sell it's only available asset."

Ginny was totally confused by her father's remarks, what did they have that was worth enough money to rebuild the burrow? Her heart sank to her shoes when she noticed her father and brothers were all staring at her, surely they would never stoop that low.

She pulled out her wand but Percy was once again faster as he grabbed it from her hand, "you can't be seriously considering selling me?"

"It's called a betrothal and we would receive a bride price," Arthur then cast a spell on his daughter that made her glow white for a few seconds, "good, a virgin will fetch a higher price."

"For Merlin's sake I'm only twelve!" Ginny protested loudly.

Arthur Wesley just smiled at his only daughter, "Your middle name's also Molly so I was just making sure you didn't take after her, I'll try and get something arranged for over the holidays so enjoy your last few days of school, I'd take you home now except we don't have a home to go to."

"Do you mean I'm getting married this summer? How is that possible and who will be the groom?" Ginny couldn't manage to keep the horror out of her voice.

"Of course it will be this summer, we need the money now and the groom will be whoever offers us the most. We might have to buy you some new underwear because prospective grooms will want to see what their getting for their gold."

Ginny couldn't believe the way her father was discussing her body like it was something he owned and could be sold to the highest bidder. "You sick bastard, I'll kill myself before I'll let some stranger put his hands anywhere near me, I don't care how much gold he's got. I'm your twelve-year-old daughter not some side of beef to be sold at the market."

Arthur looked positively smug, "You're a pureblood daughter and the family magic will prevent you harming the goods, so to speak. You will do your duty and marry whoever I decide, regardless of their age or any other conditions, you will do your duty as a wife and not bring shame on our family honour."

"What bloody honour, you stand there talking about honour and selling your daughter to the highest bidder in the same breath, you really are a sick bastard." Ginny was screaming at him now and praying she would wake from this nightmare soon.

"No I'm your father and head of the family, my decision is final so you will have a husband this summer and the Weasleys will have a new house."

She could see the determined look in her father's eyes and there would be no help coming from her pureblood brothers either. Her mother was prepared to use a love potion on Hermione so Ron could have her instead of Harry; she was unlikely to be horrified at this arrangement.

Ginny sunk to the floor and curled into a ball, her body racked with sobs as she cried for her lost life while listening to her brothers argue for improvements to the new house her body was going to provide. She had no wand, no opinion, and no option but to obey her father's wishes and be sold to the highest bidder where by magic she would be his to command.

The only people who would pay money for a bride were those that couldn't get one any other way, Ginny knew she was destined to be some old mans plaything and that thought had her vomiting all over the floor.

Being a pureblood female was not something Ginny would ever boast about again.

A/N Please review and thanks to those who have.

Chapter 12

The Slytherin table was in disarray as the sensational news of the death eater purge appeared on the Prophet's front page and listed the names of those who had fled the country with their vaults emptied and property gone. There were quite a few sitting at breakfast that now didn't have a home to go to or a guardian to look after their welfare. With no head of house and Dumbledore not anywhere to be seen the joke circulating Hogwarts was that Trelawney was now in charge, unfortunately with almost fifteen years experience she actually was the most senior professor after the headmaster.

Draco sat contemplating what was in store for him next; his parents had fled the country while Severus seemed set for joining aunt Bella in Azkaban. With no relations and no gold Draco couldn't see any other alternative to an orphanage, any 'friends' he could have stayed with were all suffering from the same set of circumstances as him.

These bleak thoughts were interrupted by a flock of owls winging their way to every student in the same position, Draco ripped his envelope open and gave a visible sigh of relief. Here was an offer to accommodate him over the summer and continue to fund his education. He had a meeting tomorrow to discuss the details but any option other than an orphanage had to be good news, for the first time that week a slight smile crept onto the Slytherins face as he realised the happy consequences of the purge – he no longer had to marry Pansy!

-oOoOo-

The group was again on the beach and Harry could see the stiffness start to leave their bodies from yesterdays first session, he intended to push them slightly further this morning before doing something different again. After calling a halt beside the cliff after they had done one more circuit of the beach than yesterday Dobby again appeared with his wonderful energy drink but no gillyweed today. Instead he began conjuring dummies and fixing large sheets of parchment to the cliff face above the dummies heads.

“When we began our training, the room of requirements provided us with everything we needed to learn to fight. The parchment will show animated diagrams of defensive and offensive moves and will design these around your physical ability and personality. Hermione is pure offence, she attacks until her opponents are down while Luna used to dodge everything thrown at her but strike like lightning as soon as an opening presented itself. Neville became the most physically powerful of the group and once ripped a dummy in half because it had managed to land a blow on Luna, yes the dummies can be animated but we’re a few weeks away from that I think.” Harry knew he had their full attention so decided to give them a little demonstration.

Hermione could tell through their rings what she was expected to do so walked up to Harry and carried out the exact same move she had flattened Sirius with, her betrothed flew through the air but twisted and landed on his feet with his wand pointed right between her eyes.

The wand disappeared before Hermione came over and kissed him, they turned to see the rest of the group looking at them in wonder.

“How the hell did you do that?” Sirius demanded

“Well we just put our lips together and do what comes naturally, I know you’ve been out of circulation for a while Sirius but I didn’t imagine I was going to have to give my godfather the talk!”

Sirius held him with a glare that said he was tired, sore and in no mood for jokes.

“Oh you mean the flip thing, it’s called training which is why we’re all here. It might just save your life one day and it impresses the hell out of chicks!” Hermione’s slap to the back of his head had everyone laughing, she knew exactly what he was doing and why, if you had the energy to laugh you could push yourself just a little bit more.

“My beautiful betrothed will now give us a slight demonstration on how to use the dummies.”

Hermione turned round and immediately gave a more than passable impression of the cartoon Tasmanian Devil, she reacted so fast that the dummies head was rolling on the sand before most of the group knew she had moved. Harry was beginning to think that transfiguring the dummy to look like Ron and wearing an 'I love Potions' t-shirt was maybe a bit too much, his Hermione had exploded at first sight of the dummy and he was slightly worried that he would be her next victim but dad saved the day.

Dan Granger put his arms around his trembling daughter and kissed the top of her head, "you have no idea how good it feels as a father to know that my daughter can kick the arse of anyone who tries to bother her."

The adrenalin coursing through her blood at the sight of the dummy dissipated as her father's arms held her, she had longed for this experience all the years she was growing up. Her parents were really grasping their second chance with both hands.

She turned and gave her father a hug before kissing his cheek, "thanks dad."

She then turned to her love and held her arms out, he almost apparated into them, "sorry love but that wound is just a bit too raw at the moment, we now know what that bastards interference could have cost us. The Weasleys will really have to stay out of our way for the foreseeable future."

A kiss later and everything was back to normal.

"Now this beautiful lady moved slightly quicker than I had intended but we can ask the parchment to slow the action down, the darker the colour and size of area affected is an indication of how much damage the blows would have done to a normal body."

The groin area became black and spread towards the black area now emanating from its chest. Most had caught Hermione's spin and elbow into its throat that resulted in the head now sitting on the beach.

Harry found himself having to cough a couple of times to get his voice back down to its normal tone as the black swelling in the groin area seemed to have the same eye watering effect on all the males except Dan, his 'that's my girl' expression was beaming out pride at a wattage to rival any FM radio station.

"We'll teach you how to hit, the dummies will glow indicating where to hit and the parchments tell you the damage your blows would cause." Harry and Hermione then had the group practicing basic moves while Dan took to it like a duck to water, he was throwing combinations by the time they were finished. The dummies and parchments assessed them individually and pushed each member to their limits.

It was a sweating but satisfied group who headed off for showers and breakfast.

Daphne Greengrass was enjoying her day that had started with the dreaded letter from home, delivered via Gringotts, as it would take a couple of days by owl.

The whole of magical Britain was talking with the name on everyone's lips being Harry Potter, her father had heard whispers of prominent purebloods fleeing the country with their tails between their legs and was delighted his daughter had allied herself with the house of Potter. Being that fence sitting was almost embedded in the Greengrass genes her father would wait for developments before taking any drastic action like declaring alliance.

They were currently being taught charms by professor Flitwick and, because the class was so small, being allowed to work at their own pace instead of having to wait on Crabbe and Goyle having everything explained to them six times. The lessons, learning environment and classmates that she could be herself amongst all helped to make her believe that standing up on Monday morning was the best decision she ever made.

The warm Italian sunshine and beauty of the Amalfi Coast was slowly melting the ex-Slytherin ice queen.

Pomona, Minerva and Poppy were sitting trying to organise what the Institute needed to get done before being able to open on September first, Minerva was noting all that they would need to buy and the Scotswoman was fast approaching overload at the running total so far, Hogwarts would never be able to afford this but then she was one of very few people who knew of the financial manipulations that went on, and with ministry approval.

The pureblood dogma that muggle borns shouldn't be allowed to attend was utter rubbish since without them the school would close. They paid in some cases fifteen times more fees than the purebloods for two reasons, their fees were comparable to the best muggle boarding schools and if purebloods were charged the same most of their parents wouldn't pay. As their children were either going to be married off or get jobs due to their families influence why waste all that good gold on an education.

The result was that Hermione's fees for the last three years would probably pay for the entire Hogwarts education of all seven members of the Weasley clan. She had been debating with herself whether to pass this information onto Harry, the Institute targeting of the muggle born students could end up closing Hogwarts but this story in the press would cause uproar of epic proportions. She had to tell him and let the group decide what to do with the information, she was nothing if not loyal and she had decided where her loyalties should be when leaving that Monday morning.

Pomona and Poppy were amazed at the European syllabus that actually had potions and Herbology closely linked but with healing included as well. The students had to understand the plants, the potion and the effects they achieved on the body. Again the equipment needed to start potions, Herbology and an infirmary from scratch would not be cheap.

Harry and Hermione were working with mum and dad to make arrangements for the Hogwarts students that had basically become orphans; with their parents on the phone both teens had dossiers for each student and were writing in the arrangements as they were worked out. Dan discovered two things, they badly needed computers with Internet access and the Gardiner credit cards had no limits.

Amelia had also sent through a list of qualified ministry personnel that would be assisting with the plan.

-oOoOo-

Albus had received notice that his presence was required at the ministry tomorrow to discuss irregularities relating to Hogwarts. After reading about the death eater purges he suspected Severus had given the DMLE information but he was aware that the potions master could overcome truth serum and was impervious to mind scans.

There was also the fact that Amelia hadn't turned up with those two pet aurors of hers yet which would definitely be the case if they broke Severus. At most he was going to be getting a dressing down for his treatment of that little shit Potter, as long as they didn't cancel the tournament Albus would listen to their bullshit all day.

-oOoOo-

Harry, Hermione, Dan and Emma met with Amelia and both aurors in Hogsmead, Albus had already left for his day at the ministry so they should be free from interference, especially since it appeared in the Quibbler that Harry had a high opinion of Madam Bones and felt that if she was in charge he wouldn't have had to leave in the first place. She was a shoo in for becoming the next minister of magic.

Dan and Emma were pretty sure that these two were going to use this opportunity to complete the task they had to do in Hogwarts so they were not going alone and both Grangers now carried guns.

They entered the castle and the laughing teens had to guide their parents by the elbow as they gawked at their surroundings before managing to get into the classroom that had been commandeered for their use. They quickly got organised before sending for the first appointment of the day, Draco Malfoy.

Draco strutted into the room and almost ran back out when he recognised who was waiting for him. "Malfoy if you leave this room then you must know the only decisions are which orphanage to place

you in and what to do next year when you can't afford Hogwarts," Draco had stopped so Harry pressed home his advantage, "it's not very Slytherin of you to leave before even hearing the proposal, take a seat and I promise that you will get to accept or decline my offer."

Draco sat in front of the panel of five with two aurors standing behind him.

"I won't waste your time so here's what we're offering, non-magical people in America have what's known as summer camp. It's people your own age who get together to do outdoor pursuits and basically have a lot of fun. You would have to live as a muggle for the summer but on September first you would be attending Salem Academy of Magic to continue your education there. Please don't think of this as some sort of punishment, you have been told your whole life that muggles are beneath you without ever having any experience of them – this is to provide you with that opportunity."

Amelia spoke, "the ministry is assisting in this venture but it is being totally funded by Lord Potter with all fees, travel arrangements, equipment, clothes and even an allowance to be paid monthly. You are well aware of the alternatives and if this is Lord Potter's idea of punishment then he can punish me anytime – it's costing him a fortune!"

Draco sat quietly, living as a muggle for two months then being allowed to attend Salem or go to an orphanage and depend on someone's charity to continue his education. The name Malfoy would now count against him and he would need a good education to make any headway in life. On paper it wasn't a hard decision but there was one thing that was driving him crazy, why was Potter doing this?

The idea that there would be no gain or a debt to be paid off somewhere down the line was inconceivable to the Slytherin and he couldn't see Potter's angle. What did Potter get out of Draco Malfoy saying yes? He felt that if he understood that then he could fight it but how do you fight an unselfish act.

He said the only thing he could say, "I'm in!"

He was to meet Tonks off the express where his trunk and wand would be sent on to Salem, he would spend the weekend staying in a muggle hotel, shopping, getting a passport from Gringotts before flying to New York on Monday, accompanied by ministry employees with the appropriate background. As everyone was being sent to different camps all over America he would join them all in Salem.

Draco left with his head spinning and the only fact that stuck in his head was that Bones was right, this must be costing Potter a fortune.

After the last interview had finished Harry glanced towards Hermione who'd been studying the Marauders map all day, a nod of her head and a "still there!" was all that he needed to hear. They had originally planned on sneaking out for a second and using the time turner Hermione still had to complete their tasks un-noticed but mum and dad would never forgive them so the group of seven headed into a girls toilet to find a red haired witch kneeling at a certain sink.

Ginny was distraught, sobbing and looked as if she had been for days. When she saw Harry the glimmer of hope in her eyes was heartbreaking to see, she threw herself at his feet with her speech being interrupted with soul wrenching sobs. "Oh Harry, I prayed for you to come.. sob ... can't open it... sob ...wish you left me down there ... sob ...tried to jump of tower... sob ...magic wont let me... sob ...never be found in chamber... sob ...being sold to buy new house... sob ...die before let old bastard touch me." At this point she became so bad that they couldn't understand a word.

Harry glanced towards Hermione and received his answer; she had total faith in Harry but wouldn't trust the red haired bint as far as she could throw her, which come to think about it was pretty far.

Harry knelt beside Ginny and scooped her into his arms, "Schhh Ginny, if you can't tell us the problem then we can't help."

After a minuet or so she was coherent enough to get her main points across, "the burrow is destroyed so my family are arranging for me to be married this summer to the highest bidder."

"MOLLY!" shouted Hermione but Ginny shook her head.

“Dad, and those selfish bastards of brothers are arguing who gets biggest room in new house.”

Dan Granger was just getting used to the role of loving father and found he liked it a lot, this distraught young girl reawakened the emotions he felt during the bank fight. “Let me see if I’ve got this right, your house got destroyed so the family is going to sell you to the highest bidder in order to rebuild?” Ginny nodded and Dan whirled on Amelia, “please tell me this isn’t legal.”

Amelia bowed her head, “I assume she’s talking about a betrothal contract and bride price in which case it’s perfectly legal. They probably took her wand and her family magic will prevent her harming herself so she was unable to jump off the tower.”

Both parents turned to Hermione, well aware that she would be the one they would have to convince, “we have to help here, I know we have the whole potions issue to deal with but what kind of sick bastard sells his own twelve-year-old daughter and what would that make us if we could help but didn’t.” Hermione had never heard her mother swear and that made her think more than anything else.

“Did Ron try a potion on Hermione? Is that why you guys left?” Ginny asked confused.

“We found out he was going to make the attempt.” Harry answered diplomatically

“I didn’t know,” Ginny answered truthfully.

Hermione asked biting, “would it have made any difference to you if the result was to split me and Harry up?”

Ginny was young but even she realised her future could hang on this answer so decided to be completely truthful, “I was honestly so in love with Harry that I would have took him any way I could, there are so few genuinely good people out there and even my own brothers are heartless bastards. Being told that I’m to be sold has changed my

opinions on everything, my eyes have well and truly been opened and no one should ever be forced in that position. I hadn't heard about the potion though I certainly wouldn't be shocked if he did."

Hermione had so many conflicting thoughts and emotions running through her head, she wasn't sure what to do and Harry was wisely staying out of her mind as he recognised this was a decision she had to reach on her own. This Ginny hadn't done anything yet and knew nothing of the plot to use potions on her, Hermione also recognised that their interference in the timeline must have caused this event, even if the other Ginny had been sold after they had closed down Harry's Gringotts account that the Weasleys had been stealing from that Christmas she still felt responsible.

Hermione already knew what her betrothed's answer would be, shit they just spent all morning trying to save Malfoy and his cronies. Hermione had no option but to give Ginny the same second chance that they were enjoying but first it was time for a few home truths.

"Ginny, Harry and I are betrothed and anyone tampering with that relationship would find themselves in serious legal trouble. I will become Lady Potter this summer and although allowed by law to take more than one wife trust me when I say this lady's not for sharing. Harry is well aware of my position and agrees with it, if you can accept this and move on we can help you, if you make a move on my man I guarantee what happened to Snape will seem like a picnic compared to what I'll do to you."

"Hermione I have tried three different ways to kill myself rather than face being married to some unknown old man, I would swear on my magic never to hope for anything more than friendship from both Potters but that bastard Percy took my wand again. I already owe Harry a life debt and would certainly consider I owed my life to whoever rescued me from this situation. If you can help then please, I'm begging here and will do anything you ask of me,"

A quick discussion over their bond and it was settled, "Amelia can we take her with us?" Harry asked.

“No, it would be classed as kidnapping. The only reason it worked on Monday was that you had no prior knowledge of the oaths and then did everything in your power to save them triggering their oaths. If Miss Weasley were to be given a wand to make any kind of oath to prevent this betrothal the person responsible would end up in Azkaban.”

“These laws are nuts!” Emma declared.

“Our society is dominated by pureblood males who make the laws to suit their needs, who do you think would be purchasing Miss Weasley? Our society is roughly about a century behind yours in values and technology, and as long as the old guard stay in charge that’s the way it will remain.”

Harry looked at Ginny and saw a small, frightened child that needed reassurance as much as her body needed air. “Ginny, we will help but we came here to do a very important job and have to enter the chamber again.”

Now that she had some hope all desire to enter the chamber evaporated and she decided to wait in a cubicle for their return, Ginny provided the first laugh of the afternoon when she told them Myrtle left, apparently Ginny’s incessant crying was driving the ghost mad.

Dan Granger felt as if he was in an Indiana Jones movie as small bones crunched under their feet while they walked along the wand lit tunnel, he was even wearing a leather jacket and a gun in its holster with only a whip and hat missing.

As if sliding down a giant tube wasn’t enough to reinforce the image they were now standing in front of a massive round metal door that Harry was speaking to in that strange hissing language. Parts of the door animated before the whole thing swung open releasing the most noxious smell Dan had ever experienced, before he could even complain his head was surrounded by a goldfish bowl filled with clean air as Harry then led them through the door.

His future son-in-law had described the Basilisk as a big snake but that was a bit like describing King Kong as a large monkey, technically accurate but severely lacking on the grandeur of the beast, it was bloody enormous!

The thought of twelve-year-old Harry fighting this abomination with a sword to save the life of the petite witch they had just left forced Dan to sit for a minute as the enormity of the task and bravery of this young man he was growing to love hit him.

He glanced around and could see he was not the only one having such a reaction, the three women were in tears while auror Shacklebolt was leaning against the wall as they all tried in vain to comprehend the achievements of the wizard known as Harry Potter.

He was surprised at Hermione's lack of reaction until remembering that she would have gotten to experience the whole thing through Harry's memories, definitely not something he could imagine was a pleasant memory and feeling his emotions as well!

As a couple their relationship was so strong because it had been forged in the heat of battle with enemies on all sides and their unquestionable belief that they would die before allowing the other to be harmed. This knowledge was truly humbling to Dan as he watched his daughter and her love extracting teeth while two dentists were so overcome with emotion to be rendered useless.

Dobby popped them back into the toilet two at a time and it was Amelia who spoke first, "Lord Potter the picture in the Quibbler just didn't do your heroics justice, why weren't you recommended for an order of Merlin?"

It was a very bitter Hermione who answered, "He saved Ginny, Hogwarts, Dumbledores job and cleared Hagrid's name while getting him out of Azkaban and his reward was to be sent back to Privet Prison and isolated from everyone who cared about him. If we didn't need the old bastard I swear I would take great pleasure in kicking his decrepit arse into next week."

Harry put his arms around her and kissed her neck, “never change Hermione, I love you just the way you are.”

Any smidgen of hope that Ginny had left of a relationship with Harry died there and then, she could see the utter devotion these two had for each other.

Amelia looked on as Harry walked up and down in front of a blank wall giving a gasp of astonishment as a door made an appearance and once again Harry led the way in.

Harry was wearing dragon hide gloves as he lifted a tiara down which brought a scream from the red haired witch, “That’s the same as the diary! Harry I can hear it calling to me, please don’t let it get me again.”

Emma held Ginny tightly as Hermione handed Harry a tooth from the Basilisk and he quickly stabbed the tiara.

Screams louder and containing more terror than Ginny could ever produce came from the inanimate object as a smoky humanoid form leaked from the centre jewel before dissolving into a black goo on the floor that Hermione quickly banished.

Amelia’s legs gave way as she found herself on the floor with two aurors standing above her with wands drawn, unsure what had happened to their boss but determined to fight it. The phrase ‘same as the diary’ had triggered her collapse as soon as she worked out what the tiara was, oh dear Merlin how many more were there?

She asked Harry the question with a glance and his answer of “seven” had her head spinning and the aurors starting to get really agitated. She held up her hand to signal that she was ok and they could calm down. “Can you give me any details?” she asked Harry.

“That’s the third one destroyed, we have one at Gringotts that came out the Lestrangle vault and we can now use the same means to destroy that as well. We know the location of the rest and will retrieve them and administer the same treatment, as you can imagine this

must stay secret and only Hermione and I have this knowledge. If this information got into the wrong hands it could totally screw us up.”

“Anything you need, anything, anytime – it’s yours for the asking. If you pull this off our world will owe you a debt that could never be repaid, Merlin they already do!” The sincerity and respect in Amelia’s voice was there for all to hear.

Shacks questions were met with a shake of the head, Harry was right, the fewer people who knew about horcruxes at the moment the better for everyone.

Ginny was assured once more that they would help before the seven beat a hasty retreat pre-empting the return of Dumbledore.

-oOoOo-

Arthur Weasley was lying alone in the borrowed magical tent contemplating his life in relation to his decision to place his only daughter on the betrothal market.

His mind drifted back to what he considered the pivotal moment of his life, meeting Molly Prewett, the red head that changed his world. She came with a reputation but shy Arthur was just glad she came; his total experience up until that time had been a few kisses and a fumble in a broom closet as a dare. She seemed to see something in him that no one had before, or since if he was being truthful. They married as soon as he got a job in the ministry; she kept him well-fed and warm at night with Bill making an appearance less than a year later.

While his pure blood status almost guaranteed him a job at the ministry the lack of money and family prestige placed him on the lowest rung of the promotional ladder. Arthur believed that as a pureblood wizard he actually was better than the rest but being a poor junior clerk in the department dealing with muggles meant he had nothing to offer the death eaters, and when the great Albus Dumbledore asked him to join the light side Arthur was so flattered he said yes.

He was regretting his decision up until little Harry Potter finished of the dark lord; Arthur thought he would be rewarded for joining the right side only to have his earlier fears confirmed and his dreams of prosperity dashed. Gold and a family name could apparently get you out of anything and the death eaters were all still lording it over the perpetually penniless and now blood traitorous Weasleys.

His career had crawled along at a snails pace but then he wasn't actually working his arse off, Arthur had found his niche and in this night of honesty probably his level as a wizard as well – dealing with biting tea cups was quite enough for him.

Of all his children Ronald was probably the closest to Arthur in ability and personality in that he expected maximum returns for minimal talent and effort in whatever field he chose. The owl requesting he spend the summer with his new girlfriend confirmed his opinion that the boy did most of his thinking using a part of his anatomy that was not his brain.

Molly and Albus had been cooking up some scheme for years to get Ginny into the Potter family and solve all their monetary problems at one fell swoop, Arthur had been quite happy to go along with that but it would appear to have blown up in their faces. A bit like the burrow since they had now determined the spell signatures that destroyed their home all belonged to Molly, leaving Arthur with the choice of the family living in a tent while they saved for years to try and rebuild their house and replace lost belongings or offer Ginny for betrothal and rebuild now.

Arthur considered this a 'greater good' decision and eased his conscience with that thought, the needs of the many out weighed the needs of the one. He would try and choose someone who wasn't too terrible for Ginny but at least she would have money wherever she finally ended up.

It was the cold light of day before Arthur had convinced himself that, as head of a pureblood family this was the only choice available to him. He had just roused himself out of the borrowed bed when his name was called from outside the tent, reaching for his wand Arthur found three goblins standing waiting on him.

The goblin in charge gave a look of distaste at the interior of the tent before speaking, "a client I represent has heard of your situation regarding the youngest female Weasley and would like to make you an offer." He pulled out a folder and handed it to Arthur.

He opened the folder and gazed upon the prettiest manor house he had ever seen, glancing at the details it was in Cornwall, had ten bedrooms with six bathrooms, reception rooms and a kitchen Molly would kill for. It also had extensive grounds and came fully furnished.

"My client would like to do a straight swap, the deeds to this house in exchange for your daughter. This is a one time only offer and the papers must be signed this morning or the deal is off, we can of course portkey to the property and allow a viewing."

Arthur was so eager he forgot that he hadn't dressed yet and was stood in just a shirt, pyjamas burn just as well as houses.

It took less than five minutes for the head of the Weasley family to make up his mind, as soon as he entered the house his decision was made and the documents were signed on his new dining room table without even asking who their client was.

-oOoOo-

The Hogwarts express was pulling into Kings Cross and Ginny Weasley was a nervous wreck, the second Harry had left Hogwarts her mind started throwing 'what ifs' at her. What if Hermione changes her mind, what if they want too much gold, what if she was already sold, the list was endless getting more and more unlikely but no less terrifying as time slowly passed.

Ginny retrieved her battered old trunk and trundled towards her beaming father, this could be very bad.

When all the Weasleys had gathered round Arthur made his announcement, "the Weasley family has a new home!"

Ginny's insides turned to lead as she dreaded the answer to the question she had to ask, "Who did you sell me to?"

From behind her a very familiar voice answered, "That would be me!"

A/N PLease review and many thanks to those who have.

Chapter 13

Ginny's insides turned to lead as she dreaded the answer to the question she had to ask, "Who did you sell me to?"

From behind her a very familiar voice answered, "That would be me!"

She turned and the one person in the whole world that she wanted to see was standing there, large as life, but Ginny was now totally confused. She couldn't understand how this was even possible so decided just to keep her mouth shut and trust he knew what he was doing.

Arthur was ecstatic! Molly was going to be so pleased with him as this was beyond his wildest dreams, a new house and a betrothal that would make his daughter happy. Arthur was going to be standing up to his wife more often as 'going with the flow' had resulted in the Weasleys being homeless and penniless, getting off his arse and asserting his authority had solved all their problems almost overnight. He was going to be fulfilling his role as head of the family with a lot more frequency.

He was jolted out of his self-congratulatory musings when the wizard spoke, "let's get out of here Ginny, the stench of pureblood greed is turning my stomach."

Both portkeyed away before anybody got a chance to say a word and without even taking Ginny's trunk with them.

Arthur was a bit miffed at this breach of etiquette but chose to ignore it as the trunks were shrunk and the remaining Weasleys headed for St Mungo's to take Molly to her new home.

-oOoOo-

Molly was starting to get more than miffed at her husband's attitude, as he wouldn't tell her what the hell was going on, Ginny and Ron weren't there and Arthur had an exceedingly smug expression on his face that she was getting close to hexing off.

She was having to wear a hat due to her baldness from her rather hasty apparition, normally it could just be reattached but as it was in the house, which had burned to the ground, that option was no longer available. As if this wasn't bad enough Molly had to wear the clothes she was admitted in as all their possessions were also destroyed thanks to her titanic temper tantrum.

If Arthur gave her one more smug smile when she asked him a question, her wand was going to be sticking in his ear and a scourgify spell should cure him of that affliction.

They all portkeyed to a beautiful house that Arthur said was the new Weasley family residence, Molly rushed through the front door, let out an ear splitting scream before drawing her wand and blasting the floor.

Arthur grabbed the wand of mental Molly shouting, "you've already destroyed one home, isn't that enough for you?"

Molly slapped his face, grabbed him by the little hair he had left and none to gently directed his gaze to the partially destroyed coat of arms embedded in the floor. Even from the part remaining Arthur could clearly discern the Lestrangle family emblem, since the Persian rug covering it for this morning's visit had been removed back to the Potter vaults as soon as Arthur left the property.

"Do you honestly expect me to sleep in Bellatrix Lestrangle's bed?" Molly didn't wait for an answer as she dragged her husband into their new dining room and plonked him down on a chair.

"You will tell me exactly what you have done, missing out no details, so I can try and work out just how big a mess you've got us into." Molly's wand was now pointing directly between her husband's eyes, his brief sojourn as head of family over. In any pissing contest between these two there would only ever be one winner.

Arthur carefully recounted his brainwave and the steps he'd taken to secure their family's future, when the identity of the wizard in the station was revealed Molly's complexion changed dramatically from

the puce she had gradually graduated towards with the telling of the tale to grey as she realised this was an impossibility.

“Where is your copy of the document you signed?” she demanded.

Arthur was dreading admitting that he hadn’t even read it never mind asked for a copy when a scroll suddenly appeared on the table in front of him, Molly grabbed it before finding she had to sit down. She looked over the document before staring at Arthur, “you have no idea what you did this morning!”

Her voice held so much anger that Arthur hoped they wouldn’t be spending tonight in that bloody tent.

-oOoOo-

The group waiting in the private room in Gringotts had their numbers increased by two as the young witch and wizard appeared courtesy of the portkey created by the goblins. The little red haired witch couldn’t hold her silence any longer, “Harry how can you be my betrothed when you’re already betrothed to Hermione? Don’t you have to marry her first before you can make another betrothal?”

“You are correct Ginny but I’m not your betrothed, please sit down while we explain the situation to you but we must hurry before the Weasleys discover what we’re attempting and try to stop us.”

Harry’s words left Ginny needing a seat anyway, she did not want to go back but couldn’t see another option until Mrs Granger spoke.

“The papers that your father signed this morning were not betrothal papers but adoption documents, he has signed away his rights to you but we must get you a new guardian and get these documents completed and on file with the ministry before he discovers this deception. We felt that not giving you a say in this would make us as bad as the people we’re trying to rescue you from so there are three options available to you but the choice will have to be made quickly. Dan and I would like to adopt you with Lord Potter as your magical

guardian and future brother-in-law with Hermione as your sister. This is one option available to you.”

Minerva McGonagall spoke next, “I am also willing to adopt you Ginny, we know each other quite well and while I’m strict in class, my two employers here will hopefully tell you that I’m not like that out of work hours.” Hermione and Harry had smiles on their faces recognising that this was about as close as Minerva got to a joke.

“My husband was killed in the last war and not having children of my own is something that has troubled me more as the years have went bye. I would dearly love someone to continue the McGonagall name for another generation and recognise that with the proper support and encouragement you have the potential to be an outstanding witch. This gives you a second option you can chose.”

The next person to speak was a shock to Ginny; Poppy Pomfrey spoke softly but with great sincerity. “I would also love to adopt you Ginny, like Minerva my husband was also killed and I threw myself into my work, healing other peoples children while longing for a child of my own. This is something I’ve been considering for years but would always delude myself that I was content caring for the children of Hogwarts, I have always wanted a daughter and your situation provides the opportunity for us both to reap some benefit from this horrendous situation you find yourself in. I would also like to add that I no longer work at Hogwarts but with Harry and Hermione, if this arrangement wasn’t suitable to you I’m sure I could find employment elsewhere that worked for both of us. This is the third option available to you.”

Ginny’s head was spinning as Harry spoke, “in an ideal world you would come and live with us for a while taking all the time you needed to reach what is a massive decision but the reality is that if Arthur or Molly reach the ministry before the document is on file they can stop this whole thing dead in the water forcing you back into their clutches. We all understand what you’re being put through here but hope you agree it’s better than the alternative.”

“Considering I tried to kill myself rather than face the alternative then that one’s not even up for discussion, the three offers I’ve got here are more than I ever thought possible and probably deserve.” She held up her hand to stop any protest before continuing, “Mr and Mrs Granger I would have loved to be part of your family, one glance at Hermione tells everyone what kind of parents you are. Unfortunately Hermione, Harry and I have a rather strained relationship at the moment and me becoming a Granger could fracture that forever, harming the four of you. This is something that I won’t do as I hope that we can be friends at some point in the future.”

Dan and Emma glanced at their daughter who was uncommonly quiet for confirmation or denial, Hermione just shrugged, “I’m not going to lie, knowing what I know the prospect of Ginny as a sister does not fill me with joy and happiness. If she were to accept your offer we would try and make the best of the situation but it would severely strain our relationships with you both, as neither Harry nor I trust her completely. If there were no other offers on the table I would have encouraged Ginny to accept as we would never allow her to be sold as a sex slave without every effort on our part to prevent that happening.”

Ginny nodded, “thank you for being so honest Hermione and also for your assistance, we all know this would not be happening without your approval.”

Hermione felt as if the redhead was having a pop at her before she heard Harry’s voice in her head, ‘she’s just telling the truth Hermione, I am having to learn that I can’t save everyone in the world and if the choice was rescuing Ginny or hurting the most important person on the whole planet to me then you should already know my answer. I would pull anyone out from being in front of a speeding truck but this was her family causing this, if they don’t give a shit about their daughter I’m not going to fight with the love of my life over it’

Hermione could feel the love flowing through their bond giving the reassurance she needed, the thought of Ginny as a sister made her feel quite ill but her parents blossoming emotions made it a certainty they would make this offer, she would play seeker for Scotland before she encouraged it though.

In all honesty the emotion flowing through the Grangers bangles was that of relief that they were being turned down, feeling duty bound to make the offer was one thing but both dreaded the practicalities if Ginny had accepted. Their relationship with their daughter was better than at any time in however many years Hermione had lived and the adoption would have undoubtedly put a strain on that.

Ginny directed her attention to the two remaining women, "as you can understand I haven't slept much this week so have been doing a lot of thinking, people have been helping me since I stepped into Hogwarts, the fact that I shouldn't have needed that help isn't relevant at the moment. I decided that if I got out of this situation I would like to repay that help by trying to do the same for others in the future. Professor McGonagall I really appreciate your offer and it means a lot to me that you would make it but I would like to be a healer in the future and that has tipped the scales in another direction. Madam Pomfrey I would be honoured to accept your offer to become a daughter, apprentice and hopefully best friend to you. As long as neither Harry nor Hermione have any objections I would be very happy to stay with you wherever you are."

Both teens nodded their acceptance, if Ginny wanted to learn how to administer potions she might as well learn from a master, of course the fact that Poppy would literally skin her alive if she even considered slipping one to someone illegally was a great relief to them both. Harry and Hermione knew that the diminutive red head needed not just a firm hand but strong moral guidance in acceptable behaviour and couldn't think of anyone better qualified to administer it than Poppy Pomfrey.

Poppy hugged her new daughter before signing the papers, which were then whisked over to the ministry for registration by the goblins. An anxious wait followed, were they quick enough? - Were they smart enough?

They daren't leave the country with Ginny until officially she was Ginny Heather Pomfrey, she was desperate to lose the name Molly and when Professor McGonagall mentioned that her husband had chosen Heather as the name for the daughter they never had, Ginny

added this in honour of her former head of house's very generous offer.

When they got the good news a copy of the document was sent by elf to the Weasleys as the relieved party headed home to Italy.

-oOoOo-

Ron appeared with Millicent in her family home, meeting her parents was not something he was looking forward to but then again he didn't seem to have much to look forward to lately. The minute he'd mentioned the destruction of the Burrow she'd dragged his arse to the nearest table and dictated a letter for him to send home, there was to be no escape. As soon as they meet her parents Ron realised two things, where Millicent inherited her looks and that his worries were groundless, she ordered them about the same way she did him.

While the full body shudder was going through the gangly redhead as images of her ordering her parents the same way she did him scarred his mind forever more, she pulled him up the stairs to show him where he'd be staying.

He found himself in a beautiful room dominated by a colossal four poster bed, "this is lovely Millie, where's your room?"

The delicate feminine laugh seemed so strange emanating as it did from such a large body, "you can be so thick sometimes Ronald Weasley!" she picked him up and threw him onto the bed before starting to undress.

Ron would have sworn that he'd never miss de-gnomeing the Burrow but he would gladly do it for the whole summer if he could just get out of here, the excited look in Millie's eyes told him he wouldn't be going anywhere for a while. He could only hope he survived the summer to make it back to Hogwarts in one piece.

-oOoOo-

Arthur walked up the drive having returned from his trip to the ministry and was relieved to see the house was still standing, though he had

yet to break the news to his wife that the adoption was legal and Harry's name wasn't mentioned in any of the adoption papers or house transfer.

Poppy Pomfrey had been a Hogwarts institution to generations of students with an impeccable reputation for professionalism and fairness, known and respected throughout the British wizarding world. There was no way they could claim foul play with his signature clearly on the document and trying to besmirch Poppy would not only be counterproductive but sheer folly as any court in the land would say Ginny was better off where she was, Ginny certainly would.

Someone had clearly repaired the floor but as Arthur was walking across it he was confronted with the message 'time to change your underwear' which clearly identified those responsible for carrying out the repair.

He found Molly sitting in her new kitchen, drinking a cup of tea and looking a lot calmer. "It's all legal and above board?" she asked.

Arthur just nodded and waited on the explosion that never came.

"Those two have fooled more than the Weasleys, - Fudge, Dumbledore, Snape and the death eaters have all felt the wrath of the Potters. The fact that they acted so swiftly and so decisively to save Ginny while giving us this wonderful house means we got off very lightly. I was worried that there would be something in the deeds that could mean we would lose it all but Harry's an honourable boy, unlike that bitch he betrothed. If you hadn't jumped in with both feet I was hoping to arrange for Ginny to be his second wife, we know now why Albus couldn't arrange the betrothal as he couldn't risk anyone looking too closely at the guardian position he claimed."

Arthur thought it was safe to sit down, "I'm sorry love but we didn't have time for that, the destruction of the Burrow not only destroyed our home but everything we owned as well. We had only the clothes we stood up in and I really couldn't see another option, it's actually worked out better than I could ever have dreamed. We finally have the house we deserve, Ginny will have a better life and I don't have to tell Bill and Charlie that their baby sister is married to some old lech."

“At least Harry still likes us, I could have killed Percy when I heard he stopped them leaving Hogwarts, we need to get Ron and the Twins back with him. I probably should write a letter thanking him for looking after Ginny and try claiming temporary madness on your part due to losing our home and me being in hospital. If you had waited we could have said something like ‘sorry can’t invite you this summer because we’re having to live in a tent’ and the boy would probably have given us a house for nothing.”

Arthur was constantly amazed by just how devious his wife could be, Ginny was lost to them but the main prize was still there – the Potter millions. The only problem reminded him of his father’s favourite saying, ‘he who fishes without bait gets rusty hook’ and he couldn’t see what else they had to prise some of that gold out of the Potters grasp and into more deserving hands.

“I understand Ron is staying with his new girlfriend, the poor boy must have been broken hearted when Harry and Hermione got together but perhaps we can get them double dating or something. It shouldn’t be awkward since he now has someone as well and at least she’s a pureblood. We need a face to face with Harry, preferably without the mudblood then we can begin to repair bridges and get our children around him again.”

The admiration Arthur felt for this woman knew no bounds and if he was to have some kind of breakdown then a few days sick leave was just what the healer ordered. “I see the twins repaired the floor.”

“ Yes and it flashes a different message depending on the circumstances but I think I weirded them out.”

Arthur just had to hear this.

“As I walked across the floor it flashed ‘curtains and pelmet match,’ they ran away screaming and haven’t been seen since.”

-oOoOo-

Harry was having a shower and thinking that life just couldn't get much better, he awoke this morning with his beautiful betrothed in his arms, they then joined the rest of their family for the morning training session where everyone was showing major improvements. After breakfast they were going to be spending the day in Naples shopping with the ability to buy anything they wanted, yes it just didn't get any better. His Hermione joined him in the shower and his theory was blown out the water.

Like Harry, Sirius was also taking a shower and counting his blessings, unlike Harry he wasn't kept company by a gorgeous girl. His plan for today was similar to the last few, eat a full healthy breakfast and lie by the pool reading a book. Hopefully Remus would be available to go over some practice duelling later and he may even join the Grangers in their weapons training.

His friend was looking better than he'd ever seen him, Harry and Hermione had given him goals to aim for and while Remus protested the salary he was more than earning it. This was another reason the werewolf was happy, he'd initially assumed it was charity and the fact he was earning every Knut gave him a rare sense of self worth.

Sirius was eager to get fighting fit, as he was desperate to participate in the horcrux retrieval, at the moment all he could do is run away. He needed to get his body into shape before being capable of doing the hours of practice needed for his reflexes to get back to anything like normal. He knew it would be a gradual process hence the reading to recover from this morning, his godson was a bloody slave driver.

Luna was excited and with good reason, she was going on her first ever date with her first ever boyfriend and her first ever friends were coming along as well. She had pounced on Neville when they met for training this morning and now she was ready to do the same again before breakfast and then heading off, the anticipation meant she could hardly stand still.

The only cloud on the horizon was the inclusion of the potions princess, none of them believed her claims of not knowing the Weasley potions plot for Hermione and Harry, Hermione had made her position very clear and Luna was considering doing the same. If

the red head made a move for Neville then her bat bogie hex wasn't going to save her arse.

Hermione had asked her at dinner to go with them on their shopping trip tomorrow and she had initially refused, citing both couples would want some time alone.

Harry's laughter caught all their attention, "Ginny we're going shopping in a muggle mall, do you really think we will be leaving Neville and Luna alone? We will be sticking together and the only split would be boy – girl when trying on clothes or to powder noses. I feel responsible since I didn't bring your trunk so the only acceptable answer is yes."

This was technically Harry and Hermione's first date in this timeline but they were more looking forward to just being with their friends and having some fun, Ginny was going to be staying there and this was an excellent opportunity to let the young witch see the benefits of her new life. This was her second chance at life though eight people would be watching her very closely to insure she didn't repeat the mistakes of her last past.

As predicted poor Neville was engulfed by one very excited blond witch the instant he stepped out of his bedroom but the wizard didn't seem to mind in the slightest.

After breakfast the group prepared to portkey while the adults were dispensing last minute words of wisdom, "stay together," "don't get into any trouble," "be back for six!"

-oOoOo-

They portkeyed into the magical part of Naples and had their senses assaulted by all the strange but wonderful sights, sounds and smells. Harry and Hermione agreed it felt like their first time visiting Diagon Alley and the only word to describe it was magical.

Like the Christmas trip in the other timeline Harry decided the first order of business was weightless and bottomless bags so headed for the luggage store, translation spells were very helpful and soon the

five were heading with their new bags to get some robes. Harry spoke to the owner who's eyes almost lit up upon hearing they were opening a new school nearby, he recommended robes of a much lighter material than was used for Hogwarts with Hermione choosing a powder blue colour. He promised to make a few designs and Dobby would pick them up tomorrow meanwhile they all chose a few robes each as their black Hogwarts ones were totally unsuitable for the climate.

A quick trip to the bookstore was a bit of a misnomer when Hermione was involved but they basically just asked the owner for every course book required by the Italian magical school, translated into English of course and Dobby would collect them tomorrow as well. Getting Hermione out the shop in under an hour must have set some kind of record though to be fair she did leave with fourteen books.

A trip to the broom store saw the five leave with new 'Velocity Eleganza' brooms, Neville and Hermione weren't too keen but Harry pointed out that this would be part of their training. He also ordered twenty 'Velocity Costante's' for the Institute after being assured by the owner these were great brooms for learners, the new first years were going to be on brand new brooms and taught to fly by a Lord. There might not be competitive Quidditch at the institute but learning to fly a broom well was something Harry intended to insure all students could do, Neville and Hermione were not the only Hogwarts students to be failed by their teaching system as far as flying went.

They then exited into the muggle shopping area and the three purebloods had to be reminded to breathe, even Harry and Hermione couldn't fail to be impressed with the marble floor, vaulted glass ceiling and fountains sprinkling away before even mentioning the stores. The girls shooed Harry and Neville into an electronics store while they perused a whole store that sold nothing but ladies underthings.

Harry had just purchased some laptops and mobile phones when he felt a spike of emotion over their bond that had him dragging Neville out the shop to find his Hermione, they had closed communication down to a minimum as he had no wish to know what underwear Luna and Ginny were purchasing, he was sure Hermione would model hers

for him later. The strength of the emotion she was feeling was bad enough but Harry couldn't seem to find a focus for it as a million things appeared to be going through her mind at the same time, he was starting to panic when he spied his love looking in a shop window then suddenly everything became clear.

Hermione was looking at the most beautiful thing she had ever seen but the name above the store meant that you could probably buy a two bedroom house for the same price as the item, there was also what Harry would want to be considered. A familiar pair of arms encircled her from behind as kisses were being applied to her neck.

"You are the woman of my dreams and that is the dress you have dreamed about since you were almost six-years-old, there is no way we are not buying it so let's go in."

They walked into the shop and were immediately greeted by an assistant who had already made her mind up they didn't belong there, "can I help you?" she asked sarcastically.

Harry had already made his mind up as well; he wouldn't have his Hermione's special moment ruined by this bitch. "Yes I would like to speak to the manager and since I'm sure you work on commission I would also say that your attitude just cost you a lot of money."

The manageress was met by a determined young man who politely handed over his plastic and said, "The wedding dress in the window, we'll take it!"

Harry asked Hermione over their bond, "what about a dress for Luna? I suppose we should get something for Ginny as well."

The universal truth that money talks was never more evident in the service the youngsters obtained, Hermione maintained that the dress was a present for her sister and would be altered by their seamstress as explaining why a fourteen-year-old was buying such a dress was not something she wanted to do. This had the happy consequence of Harry buying her another evening gown as 'not to arouse suspicion' that she was leaving the shop with nothing.

They were sitting outside a restaurant people watching while enjoying pizza, pasta and cokes. Ginny was not alone in having the best day of her life but she could tell that conversation was guarded around her and she couldn't blame them. Ginevra Molly Weasley was not a nice person, and don't even mention that family, she could see no other option than to kill her off. "Hermione, can you help me please?"

-oOoOo-

Poppy had her first experience as a parent waiting on her child coming home; she liked the sound of parent. She and Ginny had spoke yesterday but understandably the young witch was quite traumatised at the realization her former family thought she was no more than a commodity that was to be taken to market when ripe.

She was delighted when Ginny was invited to join the other teens on their planned outing; Poppy had given her some gold to spend but suspected she wouldn't need it. All the former Hogwarts staff was aware that Harry and Hermione had a serious problem with the Weasleys but none of them knew what the trouble actually was.

They had a shared suite with two bedrooms, a bathroom with shower and a small sitting room where Poppy was currently waiting on her new daughter returning.

The increase in noise signalled the return of the group but the young girl who entered their suite was not the same one who left. "What do you think?" Ginny asked.

Poppy knew this was a pivotal moment in their fledgling relationship so did what she thought was right, she drew Ginny into her arms and asked, "what do you think and why?"

Ginny started crying, "I told lies and they must have known I did but they still helped me, no saved me, and then took me out today and gave me the best day of my life. I want to be like that but have no idea how to do it. My former family were going to use a love potion on Hermione to try and get Harry for me, I wasn't told about it but heard enough to put it together and I did nothing yet had the nerve to ask

them to help me. I hate Ginny Weasley and want so badly to be Ginny Pomfrey but everyone who looked at me just saw a Weasley.”

Poppy looked at her daughter, now with short hair that had black streaks running through it, “Ginny it’s a parent’s responsibility to teach their children right from wrong, the fact that they thought this was acceptable doesn’t surprise me after the way you were treated. Please understand how abhorrent I find both acts and would do everything in my power to see anyone committing such a crime punished for it. My beliefs on this subject are part of who I am, beliefs I hope to pass on to my family!”

Poppy’s hug held more compassion than one of Molly’s clinging crushes ever did, just as Harry had killed off the boy-who-lived she had to put an end to Ginevra Molly Weasley, this was her second chance – she was Ginny Heather Pomfrey now who was going to do her utmost to earn the trust of the others.

“Oh and I may be biased here but I happen to think that Ginny Pomfrey is a beautiful young girl,” Poppy’s remark put a smile back on her daughter’s face as she excitedly began to tell her new mother what they’d got up to today, including her first ever visit to a hair salon and show what Harry and Hermione had bought her.

-oOoOo-

Dan and Emma didn’t need their bracelets to know what the other was feeling, both had tears in their eyes and thought their hearts would burst with love and pride for the sight before their eyes. Both watched as a couple of female house elves made adjustments to the fabulous wedding dress their beautiful daughter was modelling, on one level they knew she was going to be married but this brought it home and made it real.

‘What are you and Neville going to be wearing?’ Emma asked.

“Doesn’t matter!” shrugged Harry, “when my Hermione walks in, nobody will be looking anywhere else but at my beautiful bride.”

This was obviously the correct thing to say because of the passionate kiss that Hermione planted on his lips immediately after the words had left them.

“That boy should be a politician, he always seems to know the right thing to say,” Dan muttered, the sight of his daughter in white had taken away lot of the residual apprehension regarding the wedding so it was probably just as well that he couldn’t listen in on the conversation taking place over his daughter and her betrothed’s bond while they kissed.

“For being so good to me and because I love you so much I will model what I’m wearing under this dress for you later.”

“Is this something you bought in that underwear store today?”

“I’m not wearing anything from that store under here.”

“Oh, so what are you wearing?”

“I’m not wearing anything!”

‘OH!’

A/N Please review as it definitely helps with the writing.

Wishing everyone a happy 2009!

Chapter 14

After their laps of the beach and working with their dummies, the Grangers were then shown some spell work as the magical contingent fired curses for fifteen minutes at moving targets conjured by Dobby. Dan and Emma then proceeded to take their turn at target practice using automatic handguns and exploding the myth that muggles were helpless by hitting the most targets of the morning. Dan was good but Emma was amazing. The concentration on her face as she blew targets away and reloaded in such a smooth motion impressed the hell out of all the watchers.

Emma finished and found herself in a hug by her daughter, “mum that was awesome!”

Emma just looked around the group before answering, “I swore to myself that the next time my family needed me I would be prepared.”

It was Luna who helped with the emotional moment, “I don’t know about prepared Mrs Granger but you nearly scared the life out of me. Any pureblood is going to get the shock of their life if you pull that out and start firing.”

Like all good boyfriends Neville was learning the most important rule, agree with anything your girlfriend says, “Luna’s right Mrs Granger, while they’re busy spouting off about how much better they are than you, just take out your gun and put a hole in them.”

“Ok, great shooting there mum and you can watch my back anytime but I have one last surprise for this mornings session.” Dobby arrived with their four new brooms as the colour drained from Hermione and Neville.

“We are going to do some flying practice if you four want to hit the showers.” Dan and Emma sat on the sand, they’d never seen anyone on a broomstick before and weren’t about to miss this.

Harry was trying to push confidence into Hermione as she was starting to shake, "we're going to be flying slow and low over the water, the worse that can happen is you getting wet."

The four took off on their new brooms.

Ginny and Poppy were sitting on their balcony, drinking tea and watching the group train. Ginny wanted to be down there so badly but what really hurt was that if the Weasleys had just befriended Harry without ulterior motives Ron, her and possibly even the twins would have been included in Harry's plans. Being a Weasley had cost her so much.

Poppy could easily see the longing in her daughter's eyes as she watched her friends training for the event most of the magical world knew was coming, Potter verses Riddle. It would appear that Harry was not going to face this alone and Poppy's new maternal instincts were delighted her daughter was sitting here beside her and not on that beach. That all changed as Ginny began softly crying as she watched them get on their new brooms, knowing she had the same broom lying untried and unused in her new bedroom.

Ginny had seen how close the four were as they joked around while running and in-between throwing kicks and then spells at the dummies, Ginny also understood that in a life or death situation you had to be able to trust the people by your side. Her brain knew all this but it didn't make it hurt any less, especially when they took out their brooms.

"I don't have a problem with you joining them to fly and I doubt Harry or Hermione would either, why else would they buy you a new broom," Ginny couldn't believe her new mother but it made sense. She was up like a shot and back with her broom seconds later, flying off the balcony before circling back to kiss Poppy's cheek and a 'thanks mum' could be heard from the blur heading straight down to the beach.

Ginny carefully approached Harry and Hermione, startling the witch and having her fall in the sea was not the ideal way to earn back her trust, "do you mind if I join in?"

“Of course not, could you keep an eye on Neville while Hermione and I see what these brooms can do.”

If that surprised Ginny the next couple of minutes were a total shock as the pair gave a demonstration of formation flying that was out of this world.

Unbeknown to Ginny, Harry had been in his betrothed's mind as soon as they'd left the ground, eradicating her fears and giving her the experience she needed; when Ginny flew alongside he could feel the mood of his beloved change.

Hermione had always been embarrassed about her lack of flying prowess, the fact that Harry enjoyed it so much only rubbed salt into the wound but with their bond Harry's skills were at her fingertips. It was almost like Harry was flying both brooms, which in effect he was as they rocketed towards the beach and their parents.

They pulled up right in front of a terrified Dan and Emma, “if I still had my gun I would shoot you both for terrifying the life out of us, I was under the impression you couldn't fly well Hermione, you could have fooled me!” Dan was actually shaking watching that display, his only reference being witches in the movies, which never contained synchronised aerial aerobatics.

“My Harry is the best thing I've ever seen on a broom and a wonderful teacher, Dad how would you like to fly on a broomstick with a witch? I promise no tricks – just flying.”

Harry took Emma and the four flew steadily towards an excited Ginny, “that was awesome you two, Hermione you were amazing – shit you could both be Quidditch pro's!”

“Thanks Ginny but any children of Harry's are probably going to fly before they can walk and I didn't want their mother letting them down by not being able to handle a broom.”

Harry jumped in, “put your broom through some turns Gin, we’ll keep an eye on Neville now. Just don’t go outside the wards.”

“Thanks Harry, he’s doing great! I just told him to follow Luna and he seemed more than happy to do that.”

As Ginny shot away Emma turned to her daughter, “was that really necessary Hermione?”

“Yes mum it was, Ginny seems to be getting the message and we hope she can be our friend for real this time but there will be some I’ll have to show just how fast this witch can become a bitch. Harry’s exceedingly famous, filthy rich and seriously, seriously cute and a lot of witches are going to fancy their chances with my husband. I’m not going to stand for it as our bond means this has to be an exclusive relationship, the thought of my Harry with someone else would kill me. To us our bond is something wonderful that defines who we are but to others it is a challenge to be overcome by whatever means possible.”

Harry added his opinion, “I was hoping for ruggedly handsome but suppose that will come as I get older though my Hermione is right as usual, the law states anyone interfering with a bonded couple faces charges of attempted murder. We are bonded for the rest of our lives and couldn’t be happier. I wouldn’t hesitate to kill any man who laid hands on my wife.”

“I’m not picking on Ginny mum,” Hermione said “she has had the situation explained to her as clearly as possible, it will just take time for things to settle down.”

They eventually caught up with Neville, “looking good Nev, and the best news is we don’t have to climb all those stairs back up to the Institute, lead us home Luna.”

The blond led the formation, with Neville in the centre and the double loaded brooms either side, as they crossed the sand and headed up the cliff, Ginny joined at the rear and the five brooms touched down beside the pool.

Ginny quickly approached Hermione, “is it ok if I thank you and Harry for yesterday and this morning?”

Hermione smiled, “of course Gin, how did it feel flying without all the hair whipping about you?”

“It was just the best ever and the broom is amazing, I can’t thank you enough,” she hugged and kissed Hermione on the cheek before doing the same to Harry and practically skipped back to her room, clutching her new broom like it was the crown jewels.

“That is one happy witch!” giggled Hermione.

“And there’s another one!” Harry indicated towards Luna who was wrapped round Neville and tasting his tonsils.

“You did wonderful Neville, I’m so proud of you!” exclaimed his girlfriend when she surfaced for air.

“So am I,” exclaimed his grandmother.

Augusta Longbottom had arrived by portkey and sat sipping iced tea with Minerva on the terrace watching the training on the beach below.

If the truth be told she had a hard time believing Remus Lupin’s claims for her grandson yet she had just watched with her own eyes as he lived up to them, where was the shy, clumsy Neville she knew.

Like just now kissing the blond witch in front of company and not caring a jot, this was not a boy but an assured young wizard.

Even after hearing her speak he calmly turned to face her with an arm still around the blond and gave a genuine smile, “hi gran, when did you get here? This is my girlfriend Luna Lovegood.”

Luna wasn’t sure what to do or how to act so just said, “Hi!” Neville kissed Luna’s cheek before introducing everyone else, “This is Harry Potter, his betrothed Hermione Granger and her parents Dr Dan and Dr Emma Granger, everybody this is my grandmother.”

Harry came forward and shook her hand, “welcome to the Potter institute and thank you for allowing Neville to stay. If you would excuse us we’re rather in dire need of a shower before breakfast then we can all have a chat.”

Augusta Longbottom actually laughed, “you’re excused my Lord Potter, a shower is definitely a good idea.”

Everyone trooped off for his or her showers as Augusta received a further shock when Neville kissed her cheek saying, “see you soon gran” and left with his arm still round Luna.

-oOoOo-

Harry expected fireworks at the staff meeting that afternoon and wasn’t disappointed, Minerva’s volatile disclosure caused eruptions amongst everyone but an atomic explosion measured in kilotons had Dan Granger as it’s delivery system.

“You mean to tell me that not only was my daughter receiving a sub-standard education but we were being vastly overcharged to subsidise some red headed pureblood so the bastard could brew a potion to have his way with my girl.”

Dan stormed from the room and Emma was about to follow when Hermione put her hand on her mum’s arm, “I’ll go mum.”

She found her father standing gazing out over the bay, He didn’t turn round as he spoke to her, “I’m sorry princess, it’s not about the money. Your mother and I wanted the best for you and thought Hogwarts was it. Instead we find that you never had a chance, that the dice were loaded from day one and even your life was put in danger. I’m beginning to understand why Harry was so angry about being lied to, parents are being asked to make decisions beyond their knowledge and the few facts they are given are lies. I’m finding it hard to look Minerva in the eye at the moment.”

Hermione hugged her father from behind and could feel the tension start to leave his body, “if I hadn’t attended Hogwarts I would never

have met my Harry and I'll never be able to thank you enough for that. As to the rest just try what Harry and I do, don't waste your energy getting angry – use it to get even!”

Dan turned and held his daughter, “I'm sorry I failed you as a father, when I heard you say you nearly didn't come back it almost ripped the heart out of me. You have been loved since the day you were born and it wasn't your fault that I could never show it, that young man who loves you more than life itself should prove that.”

Hermione kissed his cheek, “This is our second chance dad and you can be the best grandfather in the world, our children will have a couple of crazy uncles but only one granddad.”

Dan gave her a shocked look but Hermione continued, “that's the only reason we came back, I hope to have our first child before I'm eighteen.”

“Well if we can agree that you wait until you're at least seventeen to give me time to get used to the idea I'm happy for you,” laughed Dan, “now I'm assuming that you and your other half have a plan to deal with these bastards robbing parents blind.” Hermione's smile gave him all the answer he needed.

Back at the meeting three former Hogwarts heads of house were joining the dots to form the picture of why there were no Weasleys in the Institute and Dan wanted to kill at least one of them, glances in Harry's direction brought confirmation.

“We made the discovery while they were still at the planning stage otherwise there would have been a body count.” Harry got a slight nod from Poppy and continued, “Ginny wasn't directly involved but she's a smart girl and probably had her suspicions.”

Another nod from Poppy delighted Harry, this was not because they were proved correct but that Ginny had someone she could confide in. If Poppy Pomfrey couldn't keep Ginny on the straight and narrow then no one could.

Minerva, Pomona and Filius were more convinced than ever they had made the right decision to come here, that these two had pulled out all the stops to help Ginny after what her family was going to attempt spoke volumes for the character of their new employers.

Harry comforted Emma, "it's ok, they're having a father and daughter chat."

She gave Harry a peck on the cheek, "I can feel him calming down already."

Father and daughter re-entered arm in arm and took their seats as Harry began speaking, "I came up with the name of the Institute as a joke but we have now discovered the purebloods have been taking the piss for years. Muggle borns are not only charged extra for board and tuition at Hogwarts but every single item they buy in Diagon Alley as well,"

This seemed to be news to everyone there so Harry continued, "when the Grangers enter into magical world the first thing they need to do is exchange money, being charged commission for the privilege. Paying for robes in Madam Malkin's using my ring got me a twenty percent discount yet in the magical shops of Naples they accepted Euros, Galleons, my ring and even credit cards with the same price being accepted for all. As you can probably work out purebloods are paying about a quarter less than muggle borns for everything in the entire alley."

Dan was barely controlling his temper, "please tell me you have a plan."

Hermione took over, "it's been made abundantly clear to me that muggle borns aren't wanted in Britain so we propose to bring them all here and make sure they don't spend a Knut in magical Britain. We will be targeting these students, telling their parents the truth and offering them an alternative."

Minerva flinched, "that would bring Hogwarts financially to its knees in no time."

“The purebloods want everyone who isn't one to leave, I'm proposing we show them the consequences of that, bearing in mind sixteen students left that Monday morning and twelve abandoned children of death eaters will be going to Salem. What would be the impact if we took another thirty or so of the highest paying students from first and second year.”

They all recognised Minerva as the expert and awaited her answer, “Albus has no idea how to balance the books, and removing over fifty students would have a very serious impact. If some of them were in the top fee bracket they would run out of money to pay salaries by the New Year.”

Pomona added, “I think we also must take into consideration the boy-who-lived has very publicly quit Hogwarts as well as the senior staff and the amount of students who left with him. If I was a parent I would be asking serious questions as well as looking for alternatives.”

Harry nodded at the sense behind this statement and offered to clarify their position, “We are not banning purebloods from attending the institute as not everyone buys into the dogma, our best friends for instance but the bigotry preached by most will not gain a foothold here. Bigotry of any kind will not be tolerated.”

Filius actually asked a question that concerned a few of them, “what will become of Hogwarts?”

It was Hermione who answered, “Hogwarts is an idea more than a building, it's the idea that all magical children deserve the right to a magical education irregardless of blood status. Hogwarts is dieing but if it ever got so bad we would purchase the castle and maintain the building for the day when the founder's ideas could once again prevail allowing their school to reopen. The purebloods would have to find an alternative as being uneducated combined with inbreeding is not a recipe that's going to produce the next Merlin.”

Harry handed Minerva and Pomona two folders, “the blue one is the Institute start up account, this is for purchasing major equipment, supplies and furniture that we need to get the place up and running.”

Both women baulked at the number of galleons in this account and the trust that was being placed in them.

“The yellow one is for running costs, you will see a list of supplies each pupil will have provided and their board and tuition cost are set.”

Minerva couldn't hold back any longer, “Harry this is going to cost a fortune! This is way more than Hogwarts provides and cheaper than the purebloods pay.”

“We're restricted by the size of the Institute as you know and are limited to sixteen students per year group, this means our numbers will be a maximum of sixty four students come September. Are the totals at the top of the ledgers insufficient for these numbers?” Hermione asked.

“No I think they're more than adequate but we could charge a lot more.”

Harry answered his former head of house, “we're using ‘donations’ to subsidise these children's magical education. Considering the origin of these ‘donations’ we can't think of a better use for it.”

Remus just couldn't hold his laughter with the thought of Malfoy's millions being used to pay for muggles magical education, it was a prank worthy of a marauder.

“Now you have the details we can get letters out to our students right away and invitations to potential students who can meet us in London on Saturday. We'll arrange to hire a function room at a hotel and anyone interested can visit the Institute the following weekend. We have some business that needs taking care of in Britain and hope to complete it the same weekend. With a bit of luck we might even be able to free up most of August.” The way Harry looked at his bride to be left no doubt why he wanted to free up the time.

Pomona had to ask just to be sure, “Harry do you really want us to have control over that much money? Don't you want to be consulted?”

“The cheques need both you and Minerva to sign them with the upper limit set at fifty thousand galleons, anything over that amount has to be countersigned by Hermione or myself. We are making a political statement here but that doesn't mean this is a short term measure, we want our own children to attend the Institute so it has to be the best there is.” Harry was well aware these people had years of experience running a school, he was just providing death eater gold so the job could be done properly.

Everyone now had loads to do and the Grangers were actually looking forward to spending the weekend at their own home, with Harry and Hermione staying and both of them armed with automatic pistols in invisible holsters they should be safe.

-oOoOo-

Hannah and Justin were in Diagon Alley and their ‘taking the P.I.S.S.’ t-shirts were turning heads everywhere they went, having an ice cream in Fortescue's they were approached by Terry Boot and Michael Corner accompanied by Terry's father.

“Did Potter really call his school that?” Terry asked laughingly.

Hannah was having none of it, “don't let the name fool you, the Institute is absolutely brilliant with rooms instead of dorms, a swimming pool, private beach and you know the best Hogwarts professors left along with us with Madam Pomfrey joining later that day. Susan and I were sitting studying on our balcony overlooking the Mediterranean which sure beats the hell out of the Hufflepuff common room.”

Justin was enthusiastically nodding, “we just got our letters through and my dad was ecstatic, the fees are apparently less than a tenth of Hogwarts and all books and equipment provided, even our robes are free. We also get Professor Sprout teaching potions and Professor Lupin for history of magic.”

While both boys were imagining Lavender and Daphne in swimwear Terry's dad suddenly lost that 'bored out his skull' look at the mention of lower fees and free anything.

"How can you contact this institute?" he asked.

Hannah shrugged, "Harry does everything through Gringotts and our letters all come through there, I would imagine that would be your best bet."

The man dragged both boys in the direction of the bank as similar scenes played out quite a few times over the holidays as the Institute students all wore their t-shirts with pride anytime they were in the alley.

Lavender and the Patil twins nearly caused a riot when they met some of the Ravenclaw girls who had been bullying Luna and were taking great delight in telling them what they were missing. Mandy Brocklehurst even had the nerve to ask how to apply and was not pleased when the three girls laughed in her face. None of them would believe the three girls story that Luna was like a sister to Harry and Hermione so they walked away, still laughing as they wished them luck with their applications.

-oOoOo-

Dan and Emma walked into their house to find it immaculate, every surface was spotless, the fridge had been emptied of anything that would spoil and their mail was neatly placed on the kitchen table, both turned and gave the teens questioning looks.

"Dobby's been keeping an eye on the place," Harry answered.

"I think he's been doing more than that!" Emma exclaimed as everything in every cupboard had been cleaned and stored more efficiently.

With Gringotts in the morning and the meeting of potential students in the afternoon, a Chinese carry out was ordered as the Grangers enjoyed time in their home.

Harry enjoyed seeing his family in their natural environment especially since he got to fulfil one of his most dreamed about fantasies, He got to spend the night in Hermione Granger's bedroom.

-oOoOo-

Dan Granger felt he should be immune to shocks regarding his future son-in-law but was rendered totally speechless at the sight of ONE of his vaults. Saying someone was rich was one thing, standing in front of a mountain of gold, now that was something completely different – it even felt like a surreal Monty Python sketch as Harry stabbed a golden chalice with a Basilisk fang.

Business was discussed but he'd no idea what was said as his mind tried desperately to equate the quite phenomenal wealth he'd just seen with the unassuming young man he was welcoming into the family. Hermione's words of the week before became more relevant as they left the bank and were almost mobbed by well wishers and people just wanting to see Harry Potter.

How could any young lad have all this and remain sane, far less the levelheaded, feet on the ground unless riding a broom gentleman that was the Harry he knew. Even though they were walking with arms around each other's waists a number of witches spoke to Harry as if Hermione just didn't exist.

They got out of there and into London proper as quickly as they could, glad that they had at least portkeyed into the bank or the crowd waiting on them leaving would probably give Beatle mania a run for it's money. Dan shuddered to think what Hermione's reaction would have been if news of Harry being in the bank had leaked, the first witch to throw a pair of knickers would have required hospital treatment.

They popped into a muggle café as Emma was in need of some tea to try and calm her down, brandy would probably be better but she needed a clear head for the meeting.

“When you said Harry was famous I was expecting the occasional ‘can I have your autograph please’ not lets rip his clothes off and ravish him now. Some of those girls and even women were throwing themselves at Harry.” Emma was sure the brandy was coming out tonight.

“It’s got worse since the articles mum and I dread to think what it will be like when we finally finish off Riddle. Also very few of them have any idea just how wealthy Harry actually is, that was just a small portion you saw this morning.”

“Hermione I don’t know what you were taught at Hogwarts but there’s no way what we saw this morning could ever equate to being called small!” Emma was making a mental note to stop at the nearest off-licence just in case she didn’t have enough brandy in the house, better safe than sorry.

“How do you cope with it all Harry?” Dan just had to know.

The young wizard just shrugged, “The hardest part is making friends, it’s hard to be sure if they like you, some mythical hero they think you are or just money grabbing Weasleys.” He held his betrothed’s hand, “With Hermione it’s always been just Harry, Neville kind of looks up to me but more in a big brother sense and Luna’s just special, the kindest person you will ever meet and not an ounce of deception in her body. Just wait till you meet her father, the word eccentric was coined with him in mind.”

“And wearing a sun hat with a vulture on it isn’t?” Dan’s comment had them all laughing, lightening their mood before the meeting.

-oOoOo-

The meeting was in a muggle hotel and Amelia had aurors keeping an eye on the area, Remus, Pomona and Minerva were on the door

as word had spread about the Potter Institute but entry was by invitation only.

Harry was asked to have a word with Mathew Boot who wasn't taking no for an answer, he took one look at the boy in front of him and thought this would be easy.

"I demand that my son be given the same opportunities as those in that room, what right do you have to decide children's lives?"

Harry raised his eyebrow at the cheek of the man, "Mr Boot, Terry had an opportunity to choose the Potter Institute and didn't. The Institute is owned and funded by my family therefore giving me the right to choose what students to except, there is no board and we're outside British ministerial jurisdiction so please excuse me if I fail to see that you have grounds to demand anything."

"When was he given a choice?" this was news to Mathew and did not bode well for his argument.

"At Hogwarts a group of students chose to reject being taught in the castle under the current administration and placed their faith in me, Terry chose not to. We are limited by space and that year group is accepting no more members so you can demand all you like, it will result in you being escorted off the premises by hotel security."

Mathew was used to brokering deals in the boardroom and was not about to be dismissed by a young boy, "just who the hell do you think you are?"

Harry was starting to get pissed off with this asshole and let some of his power be visible, "I am Lord Harry James Potter, owner of the best magical school in the world – who the hell are you?"

Mathew actually gulped at the sight before him, this boy was actually shimmering and his green eyes seemed to glow with fire. His sense of self-preservation had him taking an involuntary step backwards, "I'm just a parent trying to do the best for my family."

“Demanding things from me you have no right to is not a wise course of action, goodbye Mr Boot.”

Mathew's only choices were leaving under his own steam or being unceremoniously chucked out on his arse, he decided to leave.

Harry spoke to Minerva, “if the Weasleys turn up don't send for me under any circumstances, the best bottle of single malt I can find for dealing with that woman is a poor exchange I know but I will definitely owe you a favour.”

Daphne introduced Harry to her parents and sister Astoria who was going to be a second year, Colin was even more hyper than usual as his parents shook Harry's hand and mini-me Creevey AKA Denis was almost bouncing off the walls as the brothers seemed to radiate enthusiasm in perfect synchronisation.

Hermione was casting silencing charms around the hall thinking the meeting was bound to get quite heated, she was also sure foghorn Molly would show with her brood and they didn't need to hear the screaming match that was a cinch to take place when they discovered not only weren't they wanted but specifically banned from attending.

Remus and Minerva closed the doors and leaned against them in relief, showing all the signs of withstanding whirlwind Weasley, this was confirmed by Pomona when she joined them at the top table. Apparently Molly's indignation had known no bounds and swore there must be a mistake somewhere, when told Lord Potter had left specific instructions and that he was too busy to come to the door Pomona said she almost drew her wand. Arthur's job was already shaky, especially if Amelia made minister and having your wife start firing spells in the middle of a muggle hotel was not a good idea.

The top table consisted of Harry, Hermione, Pomona, Dan and Emma, the Grangers had wanted to sit with the other parents but Harry had asked them to relay their experiences to the new parents of witches and wizards.

Hermione stood and explained the discrepancies in fees and quality of education ensuring all present that every student at the Institute was not only charged the same amount but was treated the same as well.

Pomona spoke about the facilities, staff and courses available and then Dan stood.

“There are parents sitting here today that are wrestling with the hardest decision of their lives, I know because three years ago my wife and I were in the exact same position. If at that time I had the information that I do now our daughter would never have set foot in the magical world and we would just have made a monumental mistake. You see my daughter is a witch, it’s not an illness or condition to be cured, it’s who she is and learning to understand and control magic is a priority.”

Dan paused for a drink of water before getting to the hard bit, “As muggle parents of a witch or wizard your rights in the magical world are practically nil, a magical guardian is appointed without your consent or in our case even knowledge. You can’t actually remove your child from Hogwarts without their consent, what we’re offering here is an alternative and I’ll now hand over to Lord Potter.”

Harry rose slowly and began speaking, “The magical world is at least a century behind muggles in customs and technology so we intend to use this to our advantage. We can use the tithe system to bring families under the protection of house Potter, for the non-magic amongst you this bestows the same rights as every one else in the magical world as you will basically be a member of my house. The tithe is a minimum of ten galleons, about a hundred pounds a year and in return for this protection I can graze my sheep on your land, don’t worry if you haven’t any land, as I don’t own any sheep.”

As they hoped this got a laugh and eased the tension in the room, “Your child’s acceptance is in no way effected by your choice and I would like to invite you all to the school for orientation and a chance to see what we have to offer. No decisions are required or expected until after your all expenses paid trip to the Institute. We will now take questions.”

Adrian Greengrass was up like a shot, "Lord Potter your offering better facilities, courses, teachers and the protection of your house for at best a modest sum. My question is why?"

"Mr Greengrass I abhor the fact that my betrothed is the smartest and most powerful witch of her generation yet she will be discriminated against her whole life because her wonderful parents are dentists and not magical. I have the will and the means to help like-minded individuals and those being discriminated against get a better education and start on their magical journey. My reward is what everyone in this room wants, the hope that their children can grow up in a better world than we did."

"What about you-know-who?" was shouted from up the back.

"I'm sorry but I fail to see the relevance of that question, if you're worried about him targeting the Institute I can assure you it would be his last mistake."

"Excuse me Lord Potter but doesn't the travel time involved for a trip to Italy make it unviable to go there for the weekend?" Harry understood that this was a valid question if you were a muggle.

Dobby appeared before Harry could even call him and took the gentleman's arm while holding his hand out to the frightened eleven year old girl sitting beside him, the girl looked to Harry for reassurance.

"What's your name?" he asked.

"Natalie MacDonald my lord sir."

Harry was trying hard not to laugh at the awe struck little girl, "Natalie, Dobby is a house elf and a very good friend of mine. You can trust him totally and if you take his hand he'll show you some magic!"

She reluctantly took his hand and the three disappeared, much to the shock of Mrs MacDonald, "They'll return in a few moments, we're just giving a little demonstration of magical travel here."

Five minutes later they returned and while her father had to sit down Natalie was making the Creevey boys look lethargic, "oh mum you should see it, it's beautiful! I can't believe that's my new school and I'm going to learn how to be a witch."

Natalie had forgotten she was in a room full of people, most of whom were smiling at the diminutive girl. Aidan Greengrass deliberately caught Harry's eye and nodded, he got it now. It was an eye-opener for many to see something they took for granted being the cause of such wonder.

It was easy street after that with those aware of the magical world being sent timed portkeys while the newbie's would get elvin assistance.

The meeting eventually broke up and Harry pulled Remus aside, "there were no problems with the cup so tomorrow we go after the ring and the locket, we'll see you and Sirius about seven."

Soon only the four staying in Britain that night were left, "lets get some air then maybe a restaurant for dinner, after what I saw this morning Harry can pay!" Dan was joking but Harry would still be paying.

They walked out the back of the hotel to avoid anyone hanging about and unfortunately walked straight into the Weasleys.

-oOoOo-

Molly was not having a good day, not only was Ronald refusing to come back from his girlfriends he was adamant that he wouldn't go anywhere near Harry or Hermione thus removing her best option. She left Percy at home as Arthur and the twins would have to do.

Then they couldn't find the bloody place, a magical meeting in muggle London – absurd!

The fact that they weren't invited and relying on bits of information Arthur had overheard didn't help their cause either. To add insult to injury after finding the place a werewolf wouldn't let them in, with Minerva and Sprout backing him up. Obviously Harry didn't know they were at the door and those three bastards had overstepped their authority, the poor boy would be distraught when he found out.

Finally she caught a break and they saw Harry leaving the building, the mudblood was unfortunately there but she would just have to take what she could get, "Harry Dear!" she shouted while rushing towards him with her arms open.

Her plans were in ruins before she even got started, Molly was met with a torrent of abuse and the red mist of her temper started to descend. She heard one comment about her being a bad mother and that was the final straw, Molly Weasley went for her wand but found herself lying bleeding on the car park tarmac before she could even utter a curse.

Hermione was ready for trouble but nothing could have prepared her for what actually happened, as Molly rushed forward intending to embrace Harry in a hug she was stopped dead in her tracks by a voice so full of hate and anger she barely recognised it as her mother's.

"You lay one finger on my boy and it will be the last thing you ever do, where's that bastard of a son who was going to drug my daughter? Did you sell him too? What kind of a mother are you bitch." A furious Emma watched as the little fat witch went for her wand and her training kicked in, muggle Emma Granger put a bullet in pureblood Molly Weasley before she even got a spell off.

A/N Please review.

Chapter 15

The silence that followed the boom of Emma's gun seemed to drag on forever but silence and Weasleys can't exist in the same space for long.

Arthur was now on his knees beside his wife trying to stem the flow of blood from the hole in her shoulder without success, it was almost as if something was lodged in the wound.

"You skinny muggle bitch!" screamed Molly, "how dare you attack a pureblood you scum, get them boys!"

The twins were reaching for their wands but Dan was having his Clint Eastwood moment.

"Go on punks, Make my day! At this distance the bullet should go straight through you and still have enough power to take out your twin." Fred and George froze, both with identical expressions of terror on their faces, as one look at this madman was enough to tell anyone he wasn't joking.

The gun in Dan's hand was unwaveringly pointing straight between Fred's eyes. "You can't imagine how much I want to kill a red head and had you been the other bastard I wouldn't be talking but already shooting. I'm sure you were involved though and that's good enough for me, just reach for your wands if you feel lucky."

Harry was covering the situation as Hermione wandlessly cast muggle repelling charms, her parents bracelets meant they were immune, she had just finished when two people dressed as muggles apparated in and very slowly removed their auror badges for inspection.

Bob Jones and David Thomson were experienced aurors and had been allocated this duty because of their backgrounds; both had a muggle born parent.

“Can we be of assistance?” Bob asked before recognising the witch on the ground, “not you again! We already told you to move on three times today, looking for another house to destroy are we?”

A confused look from his fellow auror brought forth an explanation, “we thought she’d been attacked and her house destroyed but it turns out she totalled their home all by herself,” he indicated Arthur “husband works at the ministry and must have pulled strings to get her out of St Mungo’s psycho ward where she ended up.”

Molly’s temper knew no bounds, “that muggle bitch attacked a pureblood witch, now the law states that I get to decide her punishment.” She may be laying there leaking blood but Molly Weasley was going to have her victory. “Dementors kiss unless her daughter willingly breaks her betrothal.” It was too late for a match with Ginny but as long as the mudblood didn’t get him she would be content.

The two aurors made no attempt to hide their disgust at the witch lying there with such a look of triumph on her face, Bob thought he was going to vomit on her, David turned to Emma, “I’m sorry ma’am but as unjust as that sounds it actually is the law, I’m afraid we’ll have to arrest you. There will be a trial of sorts but they’ll all be purebloods and the result is pretty predictable.”

Molly was looking exceedingly smug with herself, well as smug as anyone lying in a car park bleeding from a gunshot wound in their shoulder can.

The boy-who-lived had been recognised immediately by both aurors who were looking at him for a way out of this situation, Harry duly obliged.

“Auror I know the law and you are correct, unfortunately you are not aware of all the facts. You see Mr and Mrs Granger are my legal guardians and under the protection of house Potter. The pureblood witch drew her wand in a muggle area and attempted to curse two children and two muggles, my legal guardian protected myself and her daughter, my betrothed from an unprovoked attack.”

“Unprovoked!” screamed Molly, watching her revenge fall apart in front of her, “she had the nerve to call me a bad mother.”

Hermione cleared her throat to get everyone’s attention; “well your oldest two sons fled the country as soon as they were old enough and you’ve just sold your twelve-year-old daughter, I would say that more than qualifies you as a bad mother.”

Both aurors couldn’t believe their ears, especially when Harry continued.

“She swapped her daughter for Bellatrix Lestranger’s house, actually sleeps in her bed.”

David couldn’t hide his anger, “I’d sleep in a tent before I’d set foot in that psycho bitch’s house, she should have been kissed, Azkaban’s too good for that maniac.”

Bob spoke to Emma, “lady you did the right thing and protected your family, there’s no telling what she would have done – and in a muggle area to.”

David nodded his agreement, “Madam Bones asked us to keep an eye on your venue, she must have been anticipating trouble.” He glanced down at the wounded witch, “we’ll take this one back to St Mungo’s and get her patched up, do you have anything to add?”

Harry decided Molly Weasley had made her last attempt to interfere with his life, “normally I wouldn’t press charges as I think she should be in St Mungo’s until she’s no longer a danger to anyone, but her husband got her out once. Everyone heard her attempting to use pureblood law to end the betrothal of the last Scion of a Noble and Ancient House, I think it’s only fair that I use those same laws to extract justice.”

The shock that Molly Weasley was feeling had nothing to do with the blood she was loosing from her shoulder, she was facing years in

Azkaban –at best! “You little ungrateful bastard, I’ve been like a mother to you and this is how you repay me.”

The power that Harry had displayed when confronting Mathew Boot earlier was nothing compared to the output that was terrifying four Weasleys and even the aurors took a few steps so they were no longer between the red heads and this force of nature.

“If you had actually given Hermione that potion you were planning to I would have hunted down and executed every single Weasley. You would have been the last to go, knowing your entire family had been killed because of your greed. I will let the laws you put so much faith in decide your fate.”

The two aurors were ecstatic, not only were they getting to arrest the right person but both felt a lot more confident knowing this young man was on their side.

“ We’ll take her away and I’m sure Madam Bones will be investigating how she got out of St Mungo’s in the first place. I understand you can be contacted through Gringotts Lord Potter.”

Harry nodded as he watched the two aurors gather up the Weasleys and portkey away. He noticed Emma start to shake as Hermione vanished the blood and pulled down her wards. Dobby again appeared just before Harry was going to call him and took the Grangers home, returning for Harry and Hermione.

By the time they got home Emma was really shaking and Dan was pouring her a brandy, Harry pulled her to him as she started to lose it. “I shot someone, oh my god I actually shot someone.”

Harry held her tight as he spoke, “And I am glad you did mum, there’s no telling who her targets were as she was beyond reason. Hermione was just about to throw up a shield and I was going to put her down, you saved her limb if not her life as I don’t know if I could have controlled my power.” He could see his words were beginning to make an impact, “with your shooting lately you could have picked which eye to put the bullet through but you protected your family

using acceptable force and we couldn't be prouder of you, I would have you watching my back anytime."

Harry sat with Emma on the sofa and Hermione joined them, both hugging her as Dan sat on the floor at her feet handing his wife a glass of brandy.

Dan waited till Emma had calmed down before asking the question that had been eating away at him, "could that bitch really have got away with her plan to split you both up or have your mother's soul sucked out." Dan couldn't disguise the shivers of dread that ran through him at the consequences of either action.

It was a sombre Harry who answered, "The magical laws would have been on the Weasleys side as purebloods, any trial would have been a joke. The purebloods are terrified of the muggle threat and the idea of mum beating a pureblood witch – she would have been found guilty before having time to take her seat."

This caused more shaking from Emma so Harry and Hermione held her tighter and both kissed her on the cheek. Dan could feel through his bracelet the kids were really helping so he was content to sit on the floor at his wife's feet, ensuring she was surrounded by love as the reality of today's events hit home.

Harry continued, "that's why we want to use the tithe system, it offers muggles the same legal protection that you benefited from today. That and the fact that I think its poetic justice when we use their own pureblood laws against them.

Hermione was sitting with her head resting on her mother's shoulder, "dad I though you were brilliant today but I think mum needs to stop you watching any more Dirty Harry movies." Her face suddenly went bright red, "HARRY! They're not those type of movies."

This, combined with the brandy actually got a giggle out of Emma, as everyone else laughed out loud, their family would be ok.

-oOoOo-

After the bullet was removed Molly's wound was soon healed, a pain relief and blood replenishing potion later and she was being led into a holding cell. Unbeknown to the witch her husband was in the adjoining cell.

Arthur was under investigation for departmental irregularities that took place to get his wife released from St. Mungo's but that's not the reason he was currently occupying the eight by six feet cell. Receiving a bride price for your daughter was not illegal, swapping her for the deeds to a house was. The fact that the house belonged to the most hated woman in the magical world didn't exactly help Arthur's case.

This left the ministry with the problem of what to do with the remaining children, three were under seventeen and the adoption of the youngest was going to have to be looked at again. The two eldest were summoned from abroad to the ministry.

-oOoOo-

The thought of going out for dinner had been rejected for the convenience of another take-away; they had just finished when the doorbell rang. Dan moved to answer it but Harry insisted on going, finding Amelia Bones with her usual two aurors waiting for him.

They walked into the living room and Emma immediately feared the worse until Amelia spoke, "Mrs Granger please relax, you will face no charges for today's disturbance, my aurors gave glowing reports on the conduct of the four of you today."

They all felt better after that as Amelia got to the real reason she was there, "Lord Potter I don't know if you're aware of this but the procedure used for the adoption of Ginny was illegal, Arthur Weasley is currently enjoying the hospitality of a ministry cell for his part in it. I fully understand and even agree with the reasons behind what you did but the law must be the same for everyone. As Molly is also in a cell my only concern here is the wellbeing and welfare of the young witch, I need to know that she accepted this of her own free will, is well, happy and being cared for. In short I really need to speak to her and as soon as possible."

Harry managed to get the 'D' out before his little friend appeared in the room.

"Do you want Madam Pomfrey to come as well Harry?" Dobby asked.

"Let the two of them decide, tell Poppy she's most welcome if she wants to accompany Ginny," Harry knew Poppy would be with her new daughter.

When Dobby left Amelia spoke again, "I want you all to know that this is purely a precautionary measure, I know Poppy and think Ginny's a lucky girl to not only have escaped her fate but ended up with someone who will be a better role model than the two currently in our cells. This is just something that has to be done to complete the investigation."

It was a worried Poppy and Ginny that Dobby brought to the Grangers minutes later, "what's the problem Amelia?" the healer asked.

"There was an incident today when Molly Weasley drew her wand on Mrs Granger."

Amelia was interrupted by Ginny, "stupid bint!" she turned to Emma, "did you shoot her?" Emma's nod drew a smile from the girl

Amelia was watching the byplay with interest but needed answers, "the result of which was that she made an attempt to break Lord Potter's betrothal and will be away for a long time."

Ginny immediately looked to her friends and was comforted when it was Hermione who answered, "don't worry Gin, we know it's nothing to do with you."

Now came the question that Amelia hoped she could live with the answer to, "Ginny can you tell me about your adoption please, take your time and don't miss anything out."

Ginny thought for a moment then began to tell her tale, "I got off the express and was told I had been sold, I was confused when Harry took me to Gringotts but I was then given three different adoption offers. The Grangers, Professor McGonagall and Poppy all offered to adopt me but the choice was mine, I chose Poppy and no offence to the Grangers here but I'm sure I made the right choice and have never been happier. We live at the Potter Institute where mum works and I will be a student there next term"

This was way better than Amelia could have hoped for and she was delighted for both Ginny and Poppy but had to get the professional bit done first.

"It is illegal to sell a minor which is basically what happened and Arthur Weasley is also in a cell for his part in this. He's claiming deception and thought he was signing a betrothal document, but as he's a departmental head in the ministry that excuse won't wash. Only a moron would be stupid enough to sign something that important without reading it and Gringotts documents can't be forged or altered. I would also like to think that any court would very quickly reach the decision that you're far more secure where you are now so by my authority I'm going to declare those documents legal and binding."

Ginny and Poppy were hugging in relief and being congratulated by everyone in the house.

-oOoOo-

Ginny entered the room at the ministry and found herself swept of her feet by a strong pair of arms, the pony tail and earring were a dead giveaway, "BILL!"

After spinning her around a few times he held his sister at arms length to get a good look at her, the new clothes and hairstyle were beautiful but it was her smile that melted the hardened curse breaker's heart.

“How are you Gin? You’re looking great.” Smiled Bill.

“I’m feeling great Bill, Poppy’s been so good to me,” she said.

Bill noticed the former Hogwarts healer for the first time, “Madam Pomfrey I can never thank you enough for what you did for Ginny, please believe me when I say my brother Charlie and I were kept in the dark about a lot of things.”

“Bill over the last few weeks it seems as if the whole magical world has turned upside down, adopting Ginny was not a hard decision and has been good for me as well.”

“It’s also very good of you to bring her here tonight so we could see her.”

Ginny noticed Percy lying on the floor, “what the hell happened to Percy?”

“Percy the prat thought the decision to sell you was a good one, Charlie was absolutely livid.”

“Charlie knocked out Percy?” Ginny asked.

“No, I did!” said Bill, “that’s why Charlie was livid, I hit the prat before he got the chance.”

A giggling Ginny asked, “Where is Charlie?”

“He took the twins to get their trunks, they at least had the sense to keep their mouths shut which is something they’re going to have to learn. There are some in this family who seem to think the world owes them a living, the twins want to open a joke shop but expect just to be handed the sack of gold needed. Both are going to be working with Charlie for six months then with me for the other half of the year, they want a joke shop they’ll bloody earn it and not sell a family member to get it.”

“Are you taking them out of Hogwarts?” his former sister asked.

“They’re just treading water there so I don’t see why Charlie or I should use our hard earned gold so they can pass their time with Quidditch and pranks, and anyway all the best people have left.” Bill’s smile to Poppy indicated that he definitely thought she was to be included in the ‘best people’ comment.

“Fred and George are going to be working with us, we’ll let them bank any gold earned and when both come of age it will be their decision what they do with their lives. A couple of years work experience will stand them in better stead than a few pitiful owls from a declining Hogwarts.”

“What about Ron?” Ginny asked, thinking their decision with the twins could be the best thing that ever happened to them, given the chance of some real life experiences with Bill or Charlie there so they don’t get into too much trouble.

“Ron has asked for permission to become betrothed to his girlfriend, her family are going to take care of him and put both of them through Hogwarts. He seemed happy enough with the outcome when we got his owl earlier.”

Ginny was totally puzzled, Ron was chasing Hermione so where the hell did this girlfriend come from, and “Who is the unlucky girl?”

“Millicent Bulstrode, do you know her?”

Ginny had her fist in her mouth, biting her knuckles and trying not to collapse with laughter, Poppy giggling beside her was definitely not helping, she could only manage to nod to Bill. She remembered Ron’s only concern on hearing his sister was to be sold was that he wanted a bigger room and thought his punishment was so apt, he’d certainly need a bigger room if Millicent was going to be in it.

“What’s she like, do you think they really love each other?”

“Oh Bill, I can’t think of any couple who deserve each other more, I couldn’t be happier for the ba... boy.” Poppy pulled her daughter to her as Ginny buried her face in her adopted mother’s chest.

Bill watched as Ginny’s shoulders shook, he thought she was crying instead of almost pissing herself laughing, she couldn’t wait to tell her friends.

-oOoOo-

The group portkeyed to the cliff top above the sea, Harry spoke to Remus and Sirius, “Ok guys we’re here at this time because it’s low tide and we hope to get no more than our feet wet. When we get in there we three have only one task, protect Hermione.”

Both Sirius and Remus cringed while waiting on the explosion from the witch about Harry’s protective attitude but she just smiled and kissed her betrothed’s cheek, what the hell was going on here?

“Hermione has a task to carry out and a couple of hundred inferi are going to do their very best to make sure she doesn’t manage it, our job is to ensure none of those disgusting things gets anywhere near the very beautiful and soon to be Mrs Potter.”

Remus and Sirius weren’t sure if Harry was joking or not, neither had ever seen an inferius but then again very few people had. “Are you serious,” asked Sirius.

“That joke gets old pretty quick Sirius and the answer is yes, Harry’s serious though I’m beginning to wonder if mum and dad with their guns would have been a better option,” the smile on Hermione’s face took any sting out of her words. They all knew you couldn’t kill something that was already dead with a bullet.

“Time and tide wait for no one people, we need to move now,” Harry and Hermione had their brooms and took Remus and Sirius as passengers as they dove off the cliff.

They swooped down to sea level and began dodging in and out of the rock formations; the last one was so tight that their shoulders actually brushed rock on both sides and their feet dipped in the water. They were now in a large cave where they flew onto a ledge to dismount.

“Shit, you two are scary on those bloody things,” Sirius thought he was a fair flier but these two were in a different league.

“Just be thankful he wasn’t on his Firebolt, that’s even faster.”

“Hermione you know we need matched brooms to do this, I’ll just have to buy another Firebolt!”

“Two Firebolts and we walk!” Remus was adamant.

Hermione took a flask out of her bag and splashed the contents all over the facing wall as a door appeared. “It required a blood sacrifice so we had Poppy draw some off us the other day and place it in flasks with stasis charms on them, we then drank a blood replenishing potion.”

Harry was handing out large bandoliers full of tubes and soon the three males had them crisscrossed over their chests, Hermione wore hers round her waist and it also had a large holster. He then distributed goggles that had a slight tint to them, “as soon as any magic is detected in this cavern the inferi are going to come after us.” Harry removed a tube from his bandolier and hit the bottom of it; they were immediately basking in the brilliant white light being thrown out by the flare. “These should last for a good ten minutes but don’t wait till they go out before lighting another one, lets light up and mount up.”

Two people and more importantly two flares to a broom as they flew over the water that was teeming with inferi to the island in the centre, the three guys took protective positions around Hermione who was beside a pedestal mounted stone basin. There was a green glow being emitted from the liquid contained within and an extremely strong shield across the basin’s top to prevented access.

Hermione sat down her flare to provide working light and removed the cordless hammer drill from its holster on her belt, she then began drilling into the bottom of the basin.

Sirius though he'd seen some sights in his time but these things were terrifying, how do you fight something that's already been killed, he glanced round to his godson who was standing there with a flare in one hand and his wand in the other. One of the creatures tried to rush past and get towards Hermione only to be met with a flame curse from her betrothed; Sirius would swear the boy was glowing with power. All that was left of the thing was a pile of ash, Harry had instantly incinerated it and Sirius felt a lot better.

Harry and Hermione never took their eyes off their allocated tasks but both were communicating all the time so he was aware his betrothed was almost through the basin while Hermione knew that she was safe in the protective bubble they were providing.

Remus thought Hermione must be nearly done because the inferi were getting desperate, one got too close and he had to defend himself, he waved the flare into its face and as it screamed Remus shoved the flare down its throat. He danced back and followed Harry's example of the flame curse, this gave him the few seconds he needed to light another flare and push them back again. He dreaded to think the trouble they would be in if they were standing here with just their wands.

The drill kicked in Hermione's hands as the bit broke through into the basin; she withdrew it and stood aside as liquid from the basin drained onto the floor. When the last of the liquid emptied from the basin its shield collapsed, allowing her to reach in and take the locket.

"Got it!" was all she said but it was enough.

Harry dropped the flare he was holding right in front of him, he ignited another and placed it to his left before repeating the process to his right. Remus and Sirius had carried out the same procedure and they now retreated back into the circle of light, ignited another flare and remounted the brooms.

It was up and away as they headed towards the exit, another flask of blood and it was negotiate the rocks time. The sea had risen slightly and they barely kept the brooms dry but negotiating the last obstacle was met with screams of joy and almost vertical climbs on the brooms.

-oOoOo-

Emma was sitting trying to read the Sunday papers but eventually gave it up as a bad job when she realised her gaze was resting more on the mobile phone placed on the table than it was on the newsprint.

Dan was making no pretences, he couldn't even sit as he paced back and forth across the room, the phone rang and he pounced.

"Hi Dad, we got it and apart from getting our feet wet everything was perfect. Nobody has as much as a scratch on them though Sirius and Remus might need a brandy but I think that was our flying."

Dan hadn't said a word, he was just so relieved to hear his daughter's voice, and she must have assumed he would get to the phone first.

"Are you going after the second one today?"

"Yes" she answered, "with a bit of luck they'll both be gone and we can go home tonight."

Dan just had to smile at her already calling the Institute home, "ok but you be careful and phone the minute you're finished, bye love."

Emma went back to being uneasy while Dan resumed his pacing, "I wish we could have went with them," she said to her husband for about the twentieth time today.

"So do I dear but we can't do anything against magical traps except distract the very people who need to concentrate, thankfully this is the last one."

“Just as well, I don’t think my nerves could have taken another one,” her husband silently agreed.

-oOoOo-

They arrived at the tiny dilapidated cottage with a dead snake nailed to the door and Harry stopped Sirius and Remus from going any further, “sorry guys we need to do this one ourselves.”

“Oh no way, we’ve seen what Emma can do with that pistol, there’s not a hope in hell we can allow you to go in there without us.”

Sirius was nodding in agreement with Remus, when Emma was in the zone with a pistol in her hand she was downright scary – just ask Molly Weasley.

Harry and Hermione started to speak in tandem, thinking that the demonstration would be as important as the words in making these two see some sense.

“It’s not that we don’t want you,”

“Its just not practical.”

“This is a very small cottage.”

“And if the shit hits the fan.”

“We know exactly what.”

“The other is going to do.”

“Where and how.”

“They’re going to move.”

“You could get.”

“Someone seriously injured.”

“Or even killed!”

“Stop!” implored Sirius, “you’re giving me a sore head. Do you honestly just expect us to just sit here while you go in there and face that alone?”

Hermione kissed him on the cheek, “of course not Sirius, we have another job for you.”

“About half a mile along the road is a graveyard that contains the remains of Tom Riddle’s father. If the remains are removed and disposed of that cuts off one avenue for him to acquire a body, we want you to take a stroll along there and deal him as big a blow as we are in here.” Harry had his game face on, he knew what could go wrong in the cottage and didn’t want Hermione anywhere near it.

Hermione of course was well aware of this and was having none of it; they were going to face everything together for the rest of their lives.

“Are we supposed to just walk in there and start digging?” Remus wasn’t too happy about letting them enter that cottage themselves.

The smirk on Hermione’s face signalled trouble, “Aren’t you supposed to be marauders? Why don’t you just pretend to be two gentlemen out looking for a quiet somewhere to spend a little alone time, hold hands as you walk in the cemetery and I guarantee anyone around will give you a wide berth.”

“Just don’t go letting the muggles see your wands!” Harry managed to say before he and Hermione burst out laughing.

“Ok Reme love lets go. We’re obviously not needed here and in this light you’re actually not bad looking!”

“Sirius I may be a werewolf but that doesn’t mean I don’t have standards.” After everyone had a good laugh to relieve the tension Remus continued, “you two take care and head towards us when

you're finished, we'll meet on the road and get the hell out of this place."

Hugs were exchanged as the two marauders started walking, "I've a feeling that we're going to be the butt of wand jokes for the next few days," said Remus.

"I very much doubt it, can you see them telling Dan and Emma that they went after that one themselves, I know I'm saying nothing. Since when did you start having standards?"

Remus thought for a minute, "I think it was seeing Harry with Hermione and wondering how these Potter men always get the best witch of their generation. Heaven knows if anyone deserves happiness it's Harry but in a few weeks the son of our best friends will be married and we're not only still single but with no prospects of that changing in the foreseeable future."

"So you're not going to ask Pomona then?" Sirius saw the panic in his friends eyes, "what, you think I haven't noticed the way you look at her? I can honestly say I've seen her checking you out as well."

Remus had run the full gamut of emotions from panic to shock but eventually and surprisingly hope, he knew he could trust Sirius not to joke about something like this. That was filed away for later because they had a job to do, "ok how do you want to play this?"

"Well as much as I love you I refuse to hold your hand in the cemetery, especially after that standards jibe."

"I was thinking more along the lines of a man taking his dog out for a walk," said Remus.

"OK," agreed Sirius, "but no collar and lead, that just makes me thing of McGonagall and Flitwick for some reason."

"You too?" shuddered Remus as a man took his black dog for a walk. He wondered what the hell Padfoot was playing at when he picked up a road kill squirrel until he realised the marauders plan.

“Brilliant Padfoot but you better brush those teeth before I get my goodnight kiss.” The chuckling Remus was drowned out by the growls coming from the big black dog.

They got to the cemetery and discovered it was deserted and a bit run down, the Riddle grave was no problem to find as it had easily the largest monument in the entire graveyard.

Padfoot dropped the dead squirrel and Remus transfigured it to resemble a human skeleton, he then performed a switching spell before transfiguring Riddle’s remains into a walking stick. The man with a walking stick and his dog casually exited the cemetery and headed down the road. They found Harry and Hermione sitting on a low wall while she phoned her parents to confirm they were all ok and that the second one had been a lot less trouble than the first, especially with Harry’s parcelmouth ability.

-oOoOo-

Emma had started preparing lunch as soon as she discovered they were safe, the relief in the house was palpable and Dad was even able to sit down. She heard the laughter coming from the back garden signalling the troops had returned.

Harry decided to finish their business before entering the house and put on his dragon hide gloves before taking a basilisk fang and stabbing the ring with it.

Hermione had put up a silencing charm to contain the dreadful screams and she once again banished the black goo before handing Harry the locket. He repeated the procedure on the locket and nothing happened.

The teens exchanged glances before Harry repeated the procedure using a different fang but still nothing happened, he cast a scourgify to remove any traces of venom before opening the locket and watching as a note fell out.

Hermione picked up the note, unfolded it and began to read out loud,

To the Dark Lord

I know I will be dead long before you read this

but I want you to know that it was I who discovered your secret.

I have stolen the real Horcrux and intend to destroy it as soon as I can.

I face death in the hope that when you meet your match,

you will be mortal once more.

R.A.B. (JKR – HBP)

Sirius felt as though he had been struck by a bludger and actually dropped to his knees as he held a shaking hand out to Hermione for the note, one glance was all it took to confirm the very familiar handwriting. He had tears streaming down his face as he spoke, his voice choked with emotion, "My brother didn't die a death eater!"

A/N Please review

Chapter 16

Sirius had to be led into the house and he kept glancing at the note every few seconds, checking that it was in fact real. They all sat around the kitchen table but it was left to Remus to enlighten the company as Sirius was caught up in memories of the past.

“Regulus was Sirius’s younger brother, he was a Slytherin the year below us at Hogwarts. I know Sirius won’t mind if I say his parents were not nice people but he always looked out for his brother. The Black parents were big believers in pure blood supremacy and put extreme pressure on Sirius to become a death eater, so much so that he ran away and lived with James at Harry’s grandparents. He begged Regulus to accompany him but he replied that he would be fine; he had always been his parent’s favourite son especially after Sirius was sorted into Gryffindor.”

Sirius was staring at the note and his tears were flowing freely again.

“When we got back to Hogwarts that September Regulus had changed, he was hanging about with known Voldemort supporters and wouldn’t speak with us. His parents had made Regulus their heir and the noble and ancient house of Black was a big prize for Voldemort. Regulus became a death eater at sixteen but was dead by eighteen, supposedly his murder was ordered by Voldemort himself and now we know the reason why.”

Sirius was still staring at the note as he spoke, “I shouldn’t have left him there, I knew what those manipulative bastards were like, he should have come to the Potter’s with me. That psychopath has taken two brothers from me now but at least I have the satisfaction of knowing they both went down fighting the evil bastard.” He looked straight at Harry, “if I ever lose like that please don’t mourn me, I would be joining my brothers and going out the way I wanted to.”

Harry was having none of it, “Listen Sirius, at the moment you’re released into my care until we can come up with a trial date. I’m bloody sure you’re not going anywhere, as this is the only family we’ve got and our kids are going to need someone to corrupt them

when they're older. I mean two dentists, a professor and parents who never got into trouble, what chance have they got if you're not around."

The fact that the straight-laced dentists both carried guns they weren't afraid to use and the respectable professor had just spent the morning fighting zombies, not to mention robbing a grave, told everyone he was joking. Claiming that he and Hermione never got into trouble was taking the joke just too far.

Hermione spoke softly to the hurting Sirius, "we need to find that locket or all our plans turn to dust, once it's destroyed Voldemort only has the snake left and it can be killed the same as any other creature. When it's time to take him and the rat down we promise you can be there to let the bastard know just who's responsible for his downfall but it can't happen without the locket."

"Regulus would have taken it to the ancestral Black family home but since I left mother must have blasted my name off the family tree tapestry because I can't remember where it is, only the current head of the family could tell me."

"Who is that?" Hermione asked.

Sirius was deep in thought for a few moments as the possible candidates played through his mind, "it might actually be me, mother would have to complete the paperwork to totally disinherit me and with Regulus there she might not have bothered. After he was murdered I don't think she would have been capable of carrying it out." He took a deep breath, "I, Sirius Orion Black, being the rightful heir of the ancient and noble house of Black claim my rightful inheritance and head of house."

Everyone watched as the Black family ring appeared on the finger of Sirius Black but only Remus had a comment, "Oh great! Now I have two bloody lords to deal with."

"Do you remember where it is?" Hermione asked.

The grimace on his face told everyone he did but wasn't exactly happy about it, "Twelve Grimmauld Place in central London, I think I would rather go back to the cave and face the inferi again than go there though."

Emma butted in, "I don't want to add to your problems Hermione but your father and I couldn't face sitting here waiting on a phone call again, we want to come with you."

Sirius tried to dissuade them, "I have no idea what we'll find when we reach the house, my brother's murder pushed my mother over the edge and she was quite mad by the time she died. Our house elf's only ambition was to have his head shrunk and mounted on the wall beside his predecessors, Remus was being very kind when he described them as not nice." Sirius was struggling to try and put it into a context that everyone could understand, "had I came home with Lily as my wife we would probably both been murdered in our sleep, my favourite cousin was blasted off the tapestry for marrying a muggle born but she wasn't the Black heir. Her two sisters were held up as paragons of pureblood elitism, Narcissa Malfoy and Bellatrix Lestrange!"

Dan put his hand on the new Lord Black's shoulder, "it's you we like Sirius, not your family. This just proves what an upstanding gentleman you are to maintain the beliefs you do with that upbringing, I can only think of one other person that shares those qualities and I don't think it's a coincidence that you're his godfather."

With that Dan and Emma left to put on their top of the range dragon hide armour that Remus had purchased for the eight of them, the morning crew were already wearing theirs under their clothes.

Both teens glanced at Remus who nodded in reply; he would be on protective detail while Harry and Hermione helped Sirius search his ancestral home.

It was a thoughtful Hermione who spoke to Sirius, trying to highlight the positive side of this latest development, "you can now bring your cousin back into the family and being Lord Black will surely not hurt when you go to trial. If we can get this locket today then it allows all

our plans to continue, if not then I don't know what we'll do as it's imperative Riddle doesn't discover what we're doing."

Emma's lunch just never received the attention it deserved as the six prepared to travel to Grimmauld Place.

-oOoOo-

Amelia Bones was staring at the confessions on her desk and felt as if only a red hot shower could wash away some of the dirt she had accumulated from reading the Weasley documents. Albus Dumbledore wanted Harry infatuated with Ginny Weasley but the girl was going to break up with him on command when the manipulative old bastard had set up a confrontation with Voldemort. How could anyone treat people like that, far less children who were supposed to be in their care?

Molly had her own plan though, she wanted the Potter fortune and fame, if this meant her underage daughter was going to have to become pregnant it didn't seem to bother the 'good mother' Weasley. Hermione was seen as a bossy mudblood who was in the way while Ginny's feelings weren't even considered. Amelia was sure the young girl would have went along with them up until they had to break up, that wouldn't have happened voluntary on Ginny's part.

The revelations were sickening and for the moment her hands were tied, without a minister of magic or chief Mugwump Amelia would just have to keep them in the cells for now. The election for minister was on Thursday and with Harry's public declaration in her favour no other candidate had as yet put himself or herself forward. If that were still the case after six pm on Tuesday the election would become a swearing in ceremony with the ministry able to move forward once more.

Amelia knew the Institute had an open weekend for parents so she was going to schedule a trial for Sirius early the following week but she would have to speak to Harry about the Weasleys. Their testimony would be devastating against Dumbledore but delaying the old goat's trial would give his lawyers an opportunity to claim the

Weasleys were delusional, after six months or so in Azkaban even a mediocre lawyer could make that stick.

If it were inconvenient to arrest Dumbledore at the moment they would have to think of something to do with the Weasleys that didn't involve being neighbours with a bunch of dementors.

-oOoOo-

Hermione thought the exterior of number twelve Grimmauld Place was in poor condition but that paled in comparison to the interior, it was like every bad horror movie she had ever seen and was anticipating Vincent Price's laughter come rolling out of the darkness to pour down the cobwebbed staircase. What she wasn't anticipating was the screeching portrait that started spewing vile abuse at them only pausing in its tirade when Sirius spoke.

"Hello Mother."

She looked over the six of them and made it blatantly obvious that she didn't approve of what she saw, "I thought there was some hope for you when I heard you'd helped the dark lord and murdered all those muggles, now you're here with the half-blood Potter brat, a couple of muggles, a girl who's got to be their mudblood daughter and that bloody werewolf. You have been a disappointment to me all my life so nothing new there, take your pack of mongrels and get out of my house!"

It was plain to everyone why Sirius had not wanted to come within miles of this place; Harry was starting to wonder if he didn't have the easier childhood.

Sirius stood his ground, "I am lord Black now mother and this is my house though I may just tear it down and destroy every trace of it."

Even as a portrait the hatred Mrs Black managed to generate in her expressions and voice was impressive, "Kreacher, Deal with these intruders any way you want."

A small filthy figure with long nails and sharp teeth exploded from the shadows with Hermione seemingly as its target before the boom of Dan's pistol reverberated around the hall. The creature was hurtled backwards and slammed against the wall, slowly sliding down but leaving the back of its head behind. Kreacher was dead before he hit the wall never mind the floor.

Dan Granger had been nervous and couldn't explain why; he figured this group of people could handle just about anything. His peripheral vision had caught some movement and a glint of gold off the wand light provided by Remus and Sirius, Dan unholstered his pistol. He was holding it upwards in the ready position that Remus had drilled into them while ignoring the portrait, trying instead to locate what was moving. Dan was an observant man and when he spied the creature he noticed the long nails that were almost claws, the sharp teeth, how filthy it was and even the gold locket around its neck but it was the unmistakable madness shining from its large eyes that held his attention. Before he had a chance to say anything the thing launched itself at his daughter with the applied intent of doing as much damage as possible, Dan just let his training take over and protected the people he loved.

"Dad!" a reproachful Hermione couldn't take her eyes off the now dead house elf, "you didn't have to kill him, Harry and I would have dealt with it."

Dan's voice was as steady as his hand, "I don't think so love, Sirius what's that your mother's portrait is wearing round her neck?" One look and they all saw the locket that none of them had noticed before, "I saw that creature sneaking around and two things immediately struck me, the madness in its eyes and the same locket round its neck."

Remus immediately placed a hand on Harry and Hermione's shoulders, "I think we have a serious problem here so let's all just take a step back and have a think about this before diving in and getting someone injured or worse."

Sirius was studying the portrait while trying to match facts to events in his head as the teens cast a powerful silencing charm around them.

Sirius had come to a conclusion and the more he thought about it the more he was sure he was right, "she must have started wearing the locket after Regulus's death, the dark bastard wouldn't want to return as an old woman but would try to influence her to do his bidding and that's what drove her mad. When she died Kreacher took over the locket and Voldemort wouldn't possess a house elf either so he was driven insane as well. That's why this place is such a dump and the little shit looked ready to tear Hermione's throat out, good shooting Dan."

Remus nodded agreement, "we have a bigger problem though, that locket has been drawing on magical energy for years and I suspect it will react as soon as a suitable host comes anywhere near it. We need to be very careful here and have a plan to deal with this."

Harry and Hermione were deep in thought before the young witch spoke, "we see two different ways to solve this problem, have an unsuitable host do it or find a way to keep his soul in the locket until we can stab it."

"If you think he wouldn't want a non magical person then I'll do it!" Emma gave Dan a strange look, "what? You would rather one of those two did it? I'd prefer it to be me rather than standing watching one of our kids put themselves in danger."

Hermione could feel the surge of emotion that passed through Harry as her father said 'our kids' so she kissed her dad's cheek with a heartfelt "thanks dad!"

Dobby popped beside them, "Dobby also volunteers, the evil one thinks elves are vermin and I would like the chance to prove him wrong."

"Let's just take a moment here," said Harry, "we need a plan and while I appreciate the offers we need to make sure that his soul is going to stay in that locket before anyone approaches it. He might not want to inhabit a muggle or elf but if it's that or die I think we all know what he would choose. No one is going near that until we're sure because if his soul possesses someone they would need to be killed."

This had the effect of a bucket of ice water down your back, any thoughts of just pushing ahead were banished now they understood the consequences of a mistake.

“Harry if Quirrell couldn’t touch you because of the protection from Lily would your patronus have the same effect on his soul piece?”

Hermione could see where Remus was going with this idea and thought it might work, “a patronus in general might hurt him so why don’t the four of us cast it at the locket while Dobby stabs it. Sorry dad but Dobby can move faster, sense if he’s in danger and perform magic to protect himself, he’s the logical choice.”

Dobby puffed up his chest in pride at not only being able to help Harry Potter but to strike a blow against the evil one as well. He would normally have been bouncing around with excitement but knew he needed to concentrate to do this very dangerous job. “Are you sure Dobby?” Harry asked and he could only nod his head in confirmation, he was ready.

“After all those years in Azkaban my patronus doesn’t work anymore so I’ll stand back with Dan and Emma in case you need covering fire.”

Hermione was grateful to Sirius for taking care of her parents while not making it too obvious. Harry gave Dobby the dragon hide gloves and his little friend withdrew a basilisk fang from the box as a silver stag, otter and wolf surrounded the dead Kreacher.

Dobby actually felt giddy with the amount of positive emotion being generated by the silver forms as he knelt beside the filthy creature, he could sense the spirit desperately trying to escape from the locket but the patroni were doing their work. Dobby placed the tip of the fang against the locket and a green mist escaped only for a stag and otter to pounce on it while the wolf circled in case it was needed. The whole event was over in seconds but the sound of the screams would stay with them all a lot longer.

Harry and Hermione hugged one delighted elf, "Dobby you were brilliant, if ever you need anything it's yours, and we all owe you big time my friend!"

Everyone was congratulating Dobby when a voice they had forgotten about spoke, "Sirius, is that you? What has happened to the house? I remember your brother being murdered on the orders of that dark bastard but can't remember anything else. I see your choice of friends is still the same but after what happened to Regulus I'm beginning to think you were right, can you ever forgive an old woman who wronged both her sons?"

The rest of them strategically withdrew leaving the tearful Sirius to try and make peace with his mother; all had noticed her portrait no longer contained the locket.

Dobby spoke quietly, "Harry Potter sir, we have elves at the Institute who would love the chance to clean this house as there's not a lot of work to do at the moment, do you think the lord Black would permit us?"

Harry looked to Remus for some guidance.

"I think that would be fine Dobby but just do general cleaning and wipe out all infestations without touching any items you think are dark, could you start in the library please to give us somewhere to sit."

"Library?" asked Emma and Hermione in perfect synchronisation causing the rest to chuckle as Dobby popped away to begin working on the Black ancestral home.

Sirius eventually found them all seated in the library sipping tea while reading an eclectic collection of books. "What's going on, one minute I was standing in a shithole then I turned round to see dirt actually disappearing right before my eyes, I know Dobby's good but he can't be that good."

The little elf appeared, “we have a team of elves cleaning your home and any items we thought were dark have been placed in a room on the third floor. Do you have any specific instructions lord Black?”

“Dobby anything you can do to brighten the place up would be great by me, also change any Slytherin paraphernalia to Gryffindor as even the bloody door handles are snakes. I don’t know about accessing the Black account at Gringotts yet so do what you can.”

Harry interrupted, “anything you need just take it out of the Potter account Dobby.”

The ecstatic little elf popped away to continue working.

“What happened with your mother?” Remus asked his friend.

“It would seem when the locket was destroyed her painting reverted back to her last update before she started wearing that cursed thing, her memory stops just after Regulus was murdered and this self didn’t know about Voldemort and Harry or me ending up in Azkaban. We had a lot of catching up to do but I see you made yourselves comfortable.”

It was a happy Emma Granger who gushed, “Remus asked Dobby to have this room cleaned first and your library is fantastic though one of the books tried to bite me.”

“Some of the books in here will be very dark, we’ll have to dispose of them and didn’t you know the library in Potter manor is about half again as big as this.”

Both women immediately rounded on Harry as if he’d been holding out on them, “What? Hermione Jean you know I’ve never set foot in the place so how the hell would I know about the library.” Hermione came over and gave him a kiss that curled his toes.

Only Dan’s coughing finally split the pair but nothing could wipe the smile from Harry’s face, “I take it we will be visiting Potter manor soon then?” he asked which earned him a similar kiss from Emma and

finally convinced Remus to get off his arse and at least speak to Pomona.

-oOoOo-

Sirius was sitting at dinner in the Institute a few days later contemplating not only recent events but also the people around the table. Amelia Bones had stood unopposed as minister of magic and would be sworn in tomorrow, he had received notification his trial would be next Tuesday as it would be one of the first official responsibilities the new minister was pushing through. Harry, Hermione and Remus had all received notices to attend as witnesses and Sirius was in no way worried, use of pensive memories and Veritaserum would show his innocence.

Discovering the truth about his brother and being able to speak to his mother's pre-madness portrait had a profound effect on his life. Sirius had assumed that resuming being Harry's godfather and helping the teenager grow into an outstanding wizard was going to be his full time job for the next few years at least, the realisation that role had already been most ably filled by the wonderful witch he was about to marry had left the marauder without a purpose in life. His mother had convinced him that he had a lot to offer not only the wizarding world but also any witch he chose to marry; this led directly to his current occupation of studying the people around him.

Poppy Pomfrey he had known since his Hogwarts years, between Quidditch injuries and marauder scrapes he wouldn't be too far behind Harry in visiting their favourite healer. She was absolutely glowing as her new role of being a mother appeared to be everything she had hoped for, Ginny was a great kid who had been raised by bad parents and was now blossoming under Poppy's care and guidance.

Ginny was forming closer links with the four other teens and knew about the horcruxes being destroyed, her description of Ron's betrothed had them all in stitches of laughter. Both mother and daughter seemed to be benefiting greatly from their new relationship and Sirius was very happy for them.

His eyes drifted to the strangest 'relationship' he had ever seen, Augusta Longbottom and Xenophilius Lovegood. Their relationship was based purely on the care of their charges and both were delighted at the positive changes Luna and Neville were having on each other.

Remus had described the former Neville and Luna to Sirius but agreed wholeheartedly this in no way matched the young couple before them now, both their guardians had been heard muttering 'betrothal' and only the fact that the couple were doing so well had held them back as they didn't want to jinx anything. You only had to watch Neville and Luna for any length of time to see this was a serious relationship, they just completed each other.

His eyes skipped over Minerva and Filius, he didn't even know if there was a relationship there it was just the way the little professor followed his former head of house about that didn't seem natural and totally creeped him out.

When Sirius looked at the Grangers he was beginning to understand what his mother's portrait had been trying to tell him, if Sirius Black could swap places with anyone it would be Dan Granger. He had a beautiful wife and the couple appeared to be on a continual honeymoon they were so attentive to each other. They not only had careers but built up a business together as well as raise their daughter who had captured his godson's heart and soul. Dan's slip of calling them 'our kids' had escaped no one's attention and the way he had dealt with Kreacher had impressed the hell out of Sirius.

He was delighted Hermione had gotten the chance with Harry to meet his parents, Sirius knew there would have been instant friendship between James, Lily and the Grangers as they were the same type of people. They had accepted Remus as a werewolf; accepted Sirius Black was innocent yet at the first sign of a threat to their family both exploded into action to protect their loved ones.

The Grangers and Potters would have got along famously as their values and beliefs were very similar. It was with a smile he imagined Lily and Emma sitting chatting about their prospective grandchildren as James and Dan sat sipping malt whiskey and spoke about sports

while secretly listening in to the more important conversation their better halves were having.

His heart filled with love when he watched the two most important people in the world to him sit joking with Ginny, if Neville and Luna completed each other then Harry and Hermione were each other. Sirius may have been letting the fact that he owed these two his life, freedom and sanity but he didn't think so, he never thought he would see two people more suited to each other than James and Lily Potter but he was wrong. These two were so compatible it was hard to tell where one person ended and the other began.

Sirius was just going to have to do a Moony, he needed to get up off his arse and go for it. He wondered how his friend was fairing on his first date with Pomona Sprout.

He was terrified of getting back into the dating scene and wished there was an easier way to meet a girl, little did he know that a conversation his godson had with the head of the Institute earlier today would change his life forever.

-oOoOo-

Ron Weasley was reading again the three letters that had ended his life; the first was from Bill granting permission for his betrothal to Millie, and the Bulstrodes had wasted no time as he was already wearing the ring. The second came from the twins explaining that the mudbloods parents had somehow put their mother in St Mungo's and that her father had found out what they were up to. The twins actually admitted to being scared shitless and the muggle had sworn he was going to kill Ron. The third letter bore the seal of the ministry and ordered his presence at the trial of Sirius Black.

If Hermione's father didn't kill him he would have to endure being dragged around Diagon Alley on the arm of his betrothed since 'they were going to be in London anyway' as Millie put it, he wasn't sure what was worse. The thought of being out in public with Millie filled him with dread, this would be announcing to the world that he, Ronald Bilius Weasley was betrothed and barring a miracle would be marrying Millicent Bulstrode.

In the chaos of the last few days of term their relationship had passed unnoticed but that wouldn't last for long, the teasing that he had endured for being poor was nothing compared to what Millie suffered. The 'troll in a dress' comments were some of the less hurtful ones though having experience of both, and both in girls toilets Ron would definitely have to say that the troll smelled worse than his girlfriend.

The idea of returning there as the only Weasley, only Gryffindor in his year and Millie's betrothed was not a pleasant one but at least it was weeks away yet, the trial was in six days.

His temper started to flare at the thought of his lot compared to what the half-blood Potter got, but before he could work himself up to a proper funk a pair of hands covered his eyes from behind.

"Hello lover bet you were just thinking about me!"

Ron prayed to every deity he'd ever heard of that the voice and hands belonged to Millie, that was bad enough but her mother had been giving him funny looks and he would drown himself in his own bath water before letting anything happen there. Maybe Hermione's dad was his best option; at least it would be quick as his other best choice was to be married to Millie and a member of the Bulstrode family for the rest of his life.

-oOoOo-

Remus was driving the little MG sports car back to the Institute with a very lovely Pomona in the passenger seat, robes can make a witch look beautiful and elegant but he was sure you needed muggle clothes to make them appear sexy. The skirt and top his date wore were nothing special but combined with the witch inside they had almost taken his breath away. He had taken her dancing and they had a great night with all nerves disappearing after their first dance together, neither was under any illusions that the night was going to end in anything more than a kiss but both were hoping for more dates in the future.

Thanks to last year teaching and now his job working for Harry, Remus was well dressed and hadn't needed to look at a price list all night, safe in the knowledge he could afford anything his date wanted. Dan had recommended the Ferrari but that was a bit too ostentatious for his tastes, the little British made MG was understated elegance and exactly the impression he wanted to make.

Pomona had never been inside a car before today and as they made their way along the winding cliff top road with the radio playing she leaned into Remus and kissed his cheek. "I've had a wonderful time and hope we can do this again," she said and couldn't fail to notice the smile on her date's face.

Remus was unable to take his eyes off the road at the moment but quickly replied, "I was just trying to figure out the best way to ask you when you beat me to it, and I definitely want to see more of you Pomona."

Pomona's throaty laugh sent his blood racing, "let's just take it a bit at a time for now," she answered.

He was definitely up for that.

-oOoOo-

Dumbledore had been working really hard though it couldn't quite be called school business, he was researching every charm, spell or enchantment he could cast on the goblet that would bond an unbreakable magical contract with the names it would choose.

He realised that he had to find staff for Hogwarts but the master manipulator's plans were well formed; Septima Vector already agreed to take on the head of Hufflepuff role though steadfastly refused to become deputy and deal with all his paperwork. This left him still needing five professors so he planned on having Horace return as potions and Slytherin head.

Arthur Weasley could easily be convinced to give up that ridiculous job at the ministry to teach charms and Head Gryffindor house, the old wizard was chuckling with laughter with the thought that Molly

could easily teach potions and head Slytherin but he would ask her to do transfiguration instead. That only left Herbology and their annual defence post vacancy to fill and if necessary he would get some outgoing students to return, he could pay them less as well.

He'd tried floo calling the Burrow a couple of times but as yet no reply, if he hadn't heard anything by the weekend he would just have to go over there. Albus certainly wouldn't be eating or drinking anything though, he knew the real Molly Weasley.

A/N Please review and thanks to those readers who have, it's greatly appreciated.

Chapter 17

The two marauders were making their way from the beach towards Potter Institute after their morning training, the prospective pupils and parents would be arriving this afternoon and they had decided to curtail working with the dummies for the visit so had a longer session this morning. The kids were now flying and the Grangers just loved to watch so it was just the two of them climbing the stairs though if Moony didn't stop grinning like the cat that got the cream he may find himself flying without the aid of a broom. He'd been out on another date with Pomona last night and hadn't stopped smiling all morning leading Sirius to threaten throwing him off the cliff.

On reaching the Institute Remus changed their route to pass the terrace so he could give Pomona a morning kiss, Sirius was about to make a smart comment until he spotted the vision that was beside his best mate's girlfriend. She looked late twenties / early thirties, shoulder length blond hair and was stunningly beautiful, had he been in his Padfoot form his tongue would have been hanging out with a puddle of drool forming on the ground below his chin. As it was he just stood there like a total prat, staring at the girl with his mouth open until an elbow from Remus made contact with his ribs.

He looked at Remus in panic, not having heard a word that had been spoken and it now looked as if he'd been asked a question that he had no clue how to answer.

Remus took pity on his friend but still couldn't resist having a pop at him, "sorry ladies but we had a very hard training session this morning and Sirius here isn't getting any younger, this is Amber, Pomona's niece and the Institute's new professor of astronomy and astrology. We were wondering if you could accompany her into Naples to see what the Italians have in the way of telescopes as we're all going to be busy getting ready for this afternoon."

Sirius thought he'd never heard a more apt name for someone as Amber currently had the sun at her back and an almost golden aurora surrounding her, when she started speaking he couldn't help but think even her voice was beautiful.

“If it’s too much trouble then I could go next week with Pomona, I just thought it would be a good idea to have something to show the parents.”

With his brain finally beginning to function Sirius at last began to speak, “it’s no trouble at all to accompany a beautiful young lady shopping, and Remus you know I’ll get you back for that age gag. Since I don’t actually work here but am in my godson’s custody until my trial on Tuesday I would be delighted to help you any way I can. Please excuse me while I take a much needed shower and change into something more suitable, I’ll see you shortly.”

He almost ran to his room and was showered, changed and heading out his room door when a wand appeared less than six inches from his nose.

Holding that wand was the pissed Pomona Sprout that had faced down Dumbledore and Sirius wondered if Remus knew what he was letting himself in for.

“I want a word with you Lord Black,” the voice itself would have pinned him to the door but the wand made sure he stayed there, “Amber has just spent a couple of months trying to get over the asshole who ditched her in favour of a witch, my niece is a squib and doesn’t need another bloody wizard leading her on. If you hurt her there will be a big black dog that’s going to be neutered, do we understand each other?”

Sirius was about to be flippant when he decided this woman needed to know the truth, “Pomona, Dan Granger and I are about the same age yet when I look at what he’s done with his life I’m ashamed, granted I lost twelve years in Azkaban but even before that I wasn’t going anywhere. I have been doing a lot of thinking lately and what I really want out of life is to settle down with the right woman and start a family, you’ll notice I said woman because witch, squib or muggle makes no difference as long as we love each other. I’ve only just met Amber and all I am looking for is a nice lunch with a beautiful woman who hopefully doesn’t find me too much of a bore. I am not interested

in casual relationships and would never hurt her, Moony and Harry would probably kill me before you got the chance.”

Pomona put her wand away as she apologised, “I’m sorry Sirius but you did have quite the reputation with the ladies and Amber means a lot to me.”

He just smiled, “that was the old me, the one who put revenge before my duty as a godparent, I’m trying to change and have some pretty good role models around me now. I promise you I will be a perfect gentleman around Amber, you have nothing to worry about.”

She kissed his cheek, “thanks for understanding,” and left him standing there thinking Moony had picked himself a keeper.

-oOoOo-

Harry was standing on the beach with his arm round Hermione thinking that today couldn’t have went much better.

As the parents and children started arriving Brutus and Cindy were revelling in their roles as head elves of the Institute and had everything running like clockwork, Dobby was more interested in serving Harry and Hermione though helped out whenever needed. The guests were led to their rooms and then a buffet on the terrace as everyone admired the view while enjoying the excellent food. This was one of the few areas where Harry thought Hogwarts had them beat, the terrace ran the full length of the building, could comfortably seat two hundred and had temperature control and insect repellent charms but it wasn’t the great hall though no one else seemed to mind.

After some very short welcome speeches they were split into groups and given guided tours of the institute, Pomona had set up a classroom outdoors as the vast majority of planting would be directly into the ground. A greenhouse would be needed to house the more dangerous plants encountered for NEWT’s but that was two years away yet, her explanation of the European system where the students grew plants, harvested them for potions and then studied the medicinal effects with Madam Pomfrey was a lot easier for the

muggle parents to understand than turning a match into a needle or making a feather float.

Poppy was a big hit after she healed John Grady, a new first year who had fallen off his bike the previous day, watching his bruises disappear in front of their eyes brought home the benefits of magic to everyone and having a healer in campus was a big bonus.

The stars of the day though were Hermione and Harry who gave flying lessons on the beach; young Natalie MacDonald was born to fly and was soon zooming along the waves screaming in sheer delight unfortunately though not everyone was the same. Denis Creevey wasn't afraid of heights or flying, he just couldn't contain his enthusiasm and wasn't able to sit still on the broom far less control it. This provided a good teaching point though as when he fell off into the sea Harry flew over and levitated the laughing boy onto the beach, it sure beat ending up in the infirmary with a broken wrist like Neville's first attempt at Hogwarts.

Dinner that night had been organised by Dan and Dobby to finish the day off in style, they were all on the beach with barbecues being tended by elves wearing chef's hats that had Dean's design on them. There was a mixture of muggle and magical with everything from cheeseburgers to dragon steaks available and bottles of coke sharing the same ice buckets as butterbeer. Festive lighting had been erected along the cliffs and beach with tables, chairs or beach mats provided for everyone's comfort.

Amber Sprout had set up some telescopes on a platform for anyone who wanted to do some stargazing; Sirius was an almost constant visitor though seemed to do far more Amber gazing than actual viewing of the night sky. Pomona had approached Harry and Hermione with a view to her niece teaching here, she was an honours graduate from a Muggle University who wanted to get away from the British magical world. Both had been impressed with her so far and were a lot more comfortable with the Institute offering astrology as opposed to divination.

Hermione kissed Harry before speaking, "there are times when I wish it was just Luna, Nev and us but I'm sure we made the right decision

with the Institute. We both remember just how terrifying our first day in the magical world was but these kids are all looking forward to coming here and their parents already know more about our world than mine did in all the years we attended Hogwarts.”

It was Harry’s turn to kiss Hermione, “as usual my wonderful wife to be is correct but are you sure about the OWL’s love, and I know how much they meant to you.”

“You mean a lot more love. If we just sit the NEWT’s then we can have a three week honeymoon instead of two, no contest as far as I’m concerned. The only reason for sitting them is to add to your emancipation and our marriage, we’ll be fully qualified as well meaning we’re legally adults in every possible way available to us.”

“So after the trial it’s cram for the exams in Potter manor library, sit the NEWT’s then get married?”

Hermione had a dreamy look on her face, “I’ll be Mrs Potter, oh Harry this is a dream come true.” The resulting snog was broken when a clearing of Adrian Greengrass’s throat was louder than the giggles coming from his two daughters.

“Lord Potter, I’m sorry to interrupt but I wanted to congratulate you on the fabulous achievement your Institute is, I am delighted that both my daughters will be attending but could you answer a question for me please?” Harry nodded for the man to continue, “ Mathew Boot is spreading rumours as to why his son was not welcome here, could I hear your version please?”

Harry took a moment to get Hermione’s help with his reply, “when Daphne stood up with the others that morning she was making a statement that she supported me rather than the current system, that meant a lot to me and was directly responsible for the Institute being born. All those students put their faith in me and I promise to do my best to live up to it, by the same token those who remained seated chose the current system and are welcome to it.”

Adrian was nodding indicating he understood Harry’s point of view.

“We currently can’t take any students older than us as the Institute is still growing, but younger students like Astoria didn’t know me and most wouldn’t have the maturity to stand and make a declaration in the great hall in front of the whole school. For the students who have shared classes with me for three years they had the knowledge and maturity to make their choice, if two Slytherins can publicly support Harry Potter then there is no excuse for anyone else choosing not to. Terry Boot made his and his father had no argument other than he wanted the best school for his son so thought he would try intimidation - big mistake.”

Hermione added to the argument, “Ravenclaw house decided en mass not to support Harry and I, we think the incident where we publicly called them on their bullying of the girl we think of as a sister had something to do with it. Apart from Luna only Padma chose to follow us and now the so-called ‘smartest house’ are realising they have made a big mistake, we have had enquiries from almost everyone of our year group but they have all been given the same answer – that year group is full. Luna and Ginny have spent the summer here and are studying hard to skip a year which will take it to full capacity.”

Harry smiled knowingly, “my information is that apart from the Ravensclaws only two other students from our year have confirmed they will be returning to Hogwarts and, as yet no new staff have been appointed. We understand why they’re panicking but it’s not our fault that Hogwarts standards are slipping, they should be looking nearer to home for answers to why that is.”

It was a thoughtful Adrian Greengrass who continued, “if you have that information then you must know about the children of death eaters being taken care off,” Harry said nothing but the fence sitter had heard and seen enough to make up his mind. “Lord Potter I have been impressed with your achievements but they pale in comparison with the dedication to your ideas and commitment to those who have faith in you. Daphne is a good judge of character and the way she has been treated while attending your Institute has been first class. My family and I have faith in you therefore I would like to publicly align the house of Greengrass with the house of Potter.”

Harry immediately held out his hand, "it would be an honour sir," and both shook hands as a light flashed through them signifying their magical agreement.

Daphne was shocked at how quickly her father had decided the fate of their house, she totally agreed with him but thought he would sit a while longer to see how the land lay. Even her years in Slytherin though couldn't contain the question she was desperate to ask, "what did happen to Draco, Pansy and the rest of them?"

"Oh don't worry, they're being well taken care of and continuing their education abroad," Harry's smile gave nothing away.

-oOoOo-

Draco Malfoy was lying in a bunk bed in severe pain and cursing Harry Potter when the miracle occurred, he realised that it wasn't Potter's fault as a smile crossed his face when he remembered the reason he was suffering.

Stepping off the express had led to a whirlwind of new adventures as he was taken shopping for everything he would need. Draco then spent the night in a hotel where he made the most important discovery of his life; he watched his first music video on TV. The pureblood Draco Malfoy was hooked on scantily clad females 'booty shakin' to rhythms he'd never heard before, as hobbies go this seemed pretty harmless compared to being an apprentice death eater.

At the camp Chuck and Bob had decided that they needed to take the 'pasty Brit' under their wing and show him how they do things in the good old US of A. Draco didn't understand half of what they were talking about but since their knowledge of Britain consisted of it being an island on the other side of the Atlantic his ignorance was usually just put down to him being English.

Draco's hormones were in overdrive as every female in the camp wore shorts and something called a 'belly top', which confused the hell out the pureblood as it's sole purpose seemed to consist of

exposing female midriffs so you could see the jewellery pierced into the girls bellybutton.

Chuck and Bob then decided they would broaden his horizons which directly led to his condition, sneaking out last night to meet three girls Draco made some startling discoveries, his cologne drew every mosquito in a two mile radius, he couldn't hold his beer worth shit, hangovers must surely be worse than the cruciatis curse and snogging a muggle girl was way better than kissing Pansy Parkinson.

When his hangover had worn off sufficiently to allow his higher brain functions to once again perform their duties these revelations would change the pureblood for ever, after all something that good simply couldn't be wrong.

America was the land of opportunities and since he would be spending at least the next four years here Draco intended to seize as many as possible, his pureblood father had ruined the Malfoy name in Britain by perusing outdated beliefs and worshiping some half blood psychopath leaving him parentless and penniless so there was nothing to go back to.

Draco thought of the opportunity that was going to await him tonight again and suddenly came up with a brilliant plan, he would cut down on his drinking, give the extra beer to Trish which should bring him even more opportunities and best of all, Potter was paying for everything. Draco may be beginning to form his own opinions and beliefs but he was still a Slytherin.

-oOoOo-

Albus still couldn't get an answer from the Weasleys and when he tried to floo there he ended up at the public floo fireplace in Diagon Alley, deciding to investigate the mystery he apparated to the Burrow. The old wizard was actually shocked to find the house totally destroyed and the magical tent in the garden unoccupied, he knew he'd hardly been out of his office in weeks but didn't think he could be so behind that something like this could escape his attention. After finding no clues he apparated to the ministry in his search for answers.

As he marched through the ministry atrium he was astonished to find himself being stopped at the security checkpoint by a disgruntled guard.

“Name?”

“My dear man you must know who I am!”

“Don’t see an identification badge so I’ll ask again before calling security, Name?”

“Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore, Order of Merlin, First Class.” He realised that was the only thing he hadn’t lost yet and the muttering guard seemed to have other ideas.

“Should have lost that as well, leaving the boy with those animals and never even checking on him,” he stopped muttering and writing before looking back to the old wizard in front of him. “Reason for visit?”

“I don’t see that’s any of your business,” Albus blustered.

The guard let out an audible sigh before sitting down his quill and going into ‘procedures for idiots’ mode, “let me explain the system to you, when a member of the public wants to enter the ministry they complete this form, receive a visitors badge and get directions to their destination. No form means no badge which means no entry, have you got that?”

Albus was desperate to dispute his status as a ‘member of the public’ but couldn’t think of an argument so just nodded in agreement.

“Reason for visit?”

“To enquire about the location of some friends of mine.”

“Didn’t know you still had any.” The guard muttered before asking, “what are their names and who do you want to see.”

“The Weasleys and I think Madam Bones would be best suited to deal with my enquire.”

Another mutter, “figures it would be them,” before he delivered his bombshell, “Minister Bones is much too busy to deal with people who walk in here off the streets because they can’t find someone, I’ll get you an auror.”

He was so taken aback by the fact that woman was now minister he didn’t hear the guard’s first request, he glanced down and there was the guard’s hand waiting on his wand. Albus hadn’t let another’s hand touch his wand for many years and he was loathe to let this jumped up janitor get his mitts on it but his choices were limited and he needed to find the Weasleys. Watching as his wand was weighed definitely qualified as a new experience before turning to find that black auror standing right in front of him.

“What can I do for you?” Shack asked in a voice totally void of any warmth or enthusiasm before reading the badge the old coot had been forced to wear. “If you’re looking for the Weasleys then I’m sorry but that information is classified so I’ll wish you good day and show you the way out.”

This was how Albus Dumbledore, greatest wizard of the age came to find himself standing on the ministry steps, he had been politely escorted out the doors and his visitor badge had disappeared as soon as he left the building. As he was standing there contemplating his next move, the hostile stares of passers-by began to annoy him so he apparated to the Weasleys nearest neighbours hoping he’d have better luck at the Lovegoods.

-oOoOo-

Roy MacDonald was standing in the magical shopping area in Naples and the experience put the final seal on his decision, translation spells had been used before they left the Institute but it was the body language being displayed that spoke volumes to the muggle.

He was comparing this experience to the one they had in Britain where his family had been visited by a Hogwarts professor who informed them magic was real and Natalie is a witch, a few pointless tricks later (why would you want to turn a table into a pig?) and they were taken to Diagon Alley. There the family were given a provisional supplies list and instructed where to buy each item but it was the stares, sneers and even open hostility that greeted the MacDonalds everywhere they went that had unsettled Roy.

Natalie was an only child who had been a precious gift late in the couples life when they had almost given up on ever having children, and now both parents were agonising over a decision that would have a major effect on all their lives. It wasn't until they attended the meeting for the Potter Institute and Dan Granger spoke that the family realised they weren't alone, his words resonated deep into their souls as a third option they were so desperate for became available.

‘There are parents sitting here today that are wrestling with the hardest decision of their lives, I know because three years ago my wife and I were in the exact same position. If at that time I had the information that I do now our daughter would never have set foot in the magical world and we would just have made a monumental mistake. You see my daughter is a witch, it's not an illness or condition to be cured, it's who she is!’

Both parents had practically made their minds up that Natalie would not be attending Hogwarts but those words had changed everything. After seeing the elation on his daughters face on that iconic moment when she flew on a broomstick for the first time it really drove the message home more than any words ever could, their daughter is a witch.

Standing observing this magical community that had welcomed them with open arms and went out of their way to make them feel comfortable was the final box ticked for the MacDonalds, Natalie would be a witch in a country where she was accepted irrespective of her lineage and would not be going to a school that her parents couldn't even see.

They also decided pretty quickly that any money spent would be in Naples rather than Diagon Alley though Natalie was insisting she get a Harry Potter poster, which weren't on sale in Italy yet. That little Creevey boy had taken her picture with Harry and Hermione and the poor soul wouldn't get a moments peace until his daughter had the print. She was obviously crushing on Harry and from what Roy had seen of him so far Natalie couldn't have picked a better role model unless it was his girlfriend Hermione.

Adrian Greengrass had explained the incident that Emma Granger was involved in and the alternative outcome had she not been under Lord Potter's protection, he would gladly sign a tithe agreement tonight when he confirmed Natalie was going to be attending the Potter Institute.

-oOoOo-

Albus was not a happy bunny, he was quickly running out of options and this was a situation he had little experience of. The Lovegoods had proved fruitless, the Grangers must have been on holiday, Privet Drive now had a rather large crater where number four used to be and even the Longbottoms were out of the country. He was scratching his head while trying to figure out his next move when he decided to try the Clearwaters; Penelope had been Percy's girlfriend for over a year now and might have some information he could use.

Penelope answered the door clearly flustered and her face only got redder as Albus enquired about the Weasleys, when Percy popped his head round the door still buttoning his shirt the reason for his girlfriend's embarrassment was clear.

Dumbledore was delighted that the situation would keep both of them off balance and he finally might get some answers.

Penelope left to make some tea while Percy spun the tale of Weasley woe from Molly destroying the Burrow, Arthur swapping Ginny for a house and the attack by the muggles on a pureblood going unpunished. Albus now found himself in a bind as, no matter how much Percy thought otherwise, both his parents were in serious

trouble and definitely wouldn't be available to teach at Hogwarts come September.

Penelope returned with the tea and Albus suddenly had the answer to his problems right in front of him, "Mr Weasley I was very impressed with your tenure as Head boy, so much so that I would like to offer you the post of transfiguration professor and head of Gryffindor house."

Both eighteen-year-olds just sat there with their mouths hanging open but Dumbledore wasn't finished, "Miss Clearwater I hold you in the same high regard so therefore would offer you the post of charms professor and head of Ravenclaw."

Albus knew he had them but decided to sweeten the deal since it wasn't costing him anything, in fact he would be saving a fair bit on salaries as he had no intention of paying them anywhere near their predecessors level. "The posts of course come with their own accommodation which can be adjoining rooms if you so desire."

Percy Weasley had been convinced he would have to move abroad for employment, as the Weasley name was now a hindrance in the ministry, all that hard work and years of study for naught. His two older brothers were both successful in their chosen fields but he planned on outshining them both, now here was his opportunity and he would get to be with Penny as well.

The young couple just reached out their hands for each other before giving their unconditional answer, "YES!"

"Excellent," beamed the old wizard, "now if I could ask you both to start on Monday as there is a mountain of paperwork to get through and it will also give you a chance to work on your lesson plans. You will of course be paid from the date you arrive at the castle and the elves will have rooms ready for you."

It was actually pathetic to watch the way both thanked him as if he'd just done them the biggest favour in the world, instead of them helping Albus out the shit, people were so easily led. He was sure both would receive good NEWT's but wasn't worried about their

qualifications, after all even breathing wasn't a requirement for being a Hogwarts professor.

He left a lot happier than he arrived and decided to pay Mr Woods a visit and conscript him into the defence professorship, he was aware that Oliver wanted a career in Quidittch so he might have to use some compulsion charms. After all if the curse held true it would only be for the one year and again Albus would save gold on his salary too.

-oOoOo-

Harry and Hermione were sitting discussing the arrangements for their honeymoon with their mum and dad, if that wasn't strange enough the invitation to accompany them floored Dan and Emma. It was Harry who explained, "we feel as if we've just found you and in my case that's true. Hermione and I used to think that as long as we were together then nothing else mattered, we now realise how naive that was. We want parents, children, aunts, uncles and friends."

Hermione continued, "before we came back the only experience we had was our friendship with Neville and Luna, now we have loving parents, a couple of honouree uncles who seem to have their eyes on adding some aunts and closer friendship with quite a few people. What we have with each other is magical but our relationships with those around us has grown beyond our wildest dreams."

"What we are trying to say is that while we might appear confident and assured, we're flying by the seat of our pants most of the time. When the locket turned out to be a fake we just panicked, after calming down we were able to access Voldemort's knowledge and discover who R.A.B. was but we still couldn't have got it without Sirius. We have only one plan and if that fails we don't know what else to do, he could disappear for years and then come after our children to get to me. He has to die by my hand but we refuse to put our lives on hold while waiting on that to happen." Harry had the beginning of tears in his eyes.

“Mum, dad we would really love for you to come with us, just to make sure we don’t get into too much trouble. Harry always feels better knowing you’ve got his back covered.”

Emma watched as their façade cracked before crumbling and leaving two insecure teenagers behind, the look of pleading in their eyes almost broke her heart. She had Harry enveloped in her arms before even realising she had moved, he was clinging to her as his tears flowed and Emma began to understand the pressure these two were under. Even allowing for their trip back in time Harry was just turning sixteen and had the weight of the world on his young shoulders, apart from Hermione, Nev and Luna seemed to be the only positive things in his whole previous life.

His admission of never having seen the sea until he came here had foretold of a much deeper problem and his revelations of his relative’s treatment had confirmed this. She had to hope that the Dursleys never crossed her path or her ever present pistol would see some more action, Emma wasn’t sure if she could restrict herself to a single bullet in the shoulder as this boy was now her son in everything but blood.

She could feel Dan mirroring her emotions as he hugged their daughter so she pulled back, kissed Harry on the forehead and said, “of course we’ll go with you, now just what have we let ourselves in for?”

A folder appeared on the table as Hermione chuckled, “thanks Dobby”

It was a very contented Harry and Hermione who lay entwined in bed that night with their honeymoon itinerary agreed, now they had to go to Gringotts tomorrow after Sirius’s trial and iron out all the details. They also intended opening accounts for all the children who had now joined them under a tithe agreement, for the agreement to be legal they were required to take the money from them but there was no law that said it couldn’t be returned to the children. Opening Gringotts accounts and issuing debit cards linked to them would allow their parents to transfer money directly to their kids in Italy without paying exchange fees. Gringotts were taking the view that the short-

term loss in fees would be recuperated by all the extra customers this would bring in.

The open weekend had been an astonishing success with every single prospective student signing-up to attend, Adrian had told of Emma's encounter and they all had taken advantage of the tithe agreement. The Potter Institute would have fifty-nine pupils come September and enough enquires to fill it twice over, Hogwarts was going to be missing over seventy pupils between them and Salem not counting anyone else who dropped out.

If anything they were even closer to Nev and Luna now while Poppy was turning out to be just what Ginny needed as the change in the girl was a lot more than cosmetic. Sirius and Remus were out on a double date, supposedly to take his mind off the trial tomorrow but both suspected ulterior motives and noticed that the two Sprout women seemingly were all in favour.

They weren't too worried about the outcome but they were all going in a show of support for Sirius, in full armour and loaded for bear. They weren't looking for trouble but it just seemed to keep finding them so they would be prepared for anything.

Counting their blessings as well as the number of days till their wedding the two teens fell asleep with smiles on their faces.

-oOoOo-

At the Bulstrode residence in England another two teens lay in bed though only one of them was awake, Millicent was perhaps the only person in Britain who was a louder snorer than her betrothed but that wasn't why he couldn't sleep. Tomorrow Ron was going to have to face up to his actions of what he was trying with Hermione and the fact that Millie was now his betrothed, he had absolutely no idea what to do.

Normally his mother would have dealt with the situation leaving him free to dream about food, Quidditch and girls in that order. He had images of everyone he had ever known in his entire life gathered in Diagon Alley to laugh and ridicule as Millie dragged him down the

street, he still wasn't sure if getting killed by Mr Granger wasn't preferable.

It almost felt that it was him who was on trial tomorrow with the guilty verdict already in and it was only his punishment that had still to be decided, he was dreading what tomorrow was to bring and every time he closed his eyes visions of a fate worse than death haunted his dreams, Weasley twins with Millie as their mother.

-oOoOo-

Bertha Jorkins closed her eyes for the last time in an Albanian hovel as the creature that was Voldemort decided she had no more information to give and murdered the witch. Bertha had left on holiday the weekend before the Harry Potter story broke in the Quibbler so neither Voldemort nor Wormtail were aware of the changes taking place in Britain in the last few weeks. This didn't matter though as his plans were now made, Voldemort would be returning to Britain and this time Harry Potter was going to die.

Please review.

Chapter 18

Remus didn't usually like to admit he was wrong but in this case it was a pleasure, his premise that only muggle clothes could make a woman look sexy was shattered into a million pieces as he saw the ladies of the Institute in their new Italian made wizarding robes. Apparently it was another case of the British magical community being well behind their Italian counterparts and the group had heads turning as they made their way through the ministry towards the Wizengamot chamber where Sirius was to get his day in court.

Harry had ordered designer robes for everyone in the pale blue colour that was going to be the Institute's uniform and each had the new crest displayed prominently so there was no doubting who they were. An owl that looked remarkably like Hedwig was perched on a rather thick book that had a wand lying across it; the motto in Italian 'l'abilità è tutta' roughly translated as 'Ability is all' and said everything that needed saying about the Institute.

There were quite a few who had the Potter crest on the sleeve of their robes showing they were under the protection of house Potter, Remus as a werewolf, Amber as a squib and Filius as a crossbreed were all grateful for it. Dan, Emma and Hermione had the Potter crest displayed on the chest above that of the Institute signifying that they were family while Minerva had hers trimmed with the McGonagall family tartan rather than her clan crest. Ginny was wearing the Pomfrey crest along with Poppy while the Lovegoods, Longbottoms and Pomona all proudly displayed their family emblems.

Lord's Potter and Black led the procession and wore cloaks signifying their rank; Sirius was practically unrecognisable from the haunted, emaciated creature that was on the run. Good food, exercise, sunshine and a new haircut at Ambers 'suggestion' had made a big difference with the stylish dark blue robes emblazoned with the Black family crest completing the transformation, he looked every inch the Lord he was.

They entered the courtroom and Sirius was led to the chair in the centre of the floor, he had given Harry his wand for safekeeping so they couldn't take it off him. Sirius sat there alone, quietly

contemplating the things that could go wrong today but safe in the knowledge there wasn't any way Harry would accept anything other than an innocent verdict. If the Wizengamot tried to screw with him today they were in for a rude awakening, he had a slight chuckle to himself as the security guards had totally dismissed Dan and Emma as any threat. If it came down to a fight he for one was glad they were on his side and wondered what the effect would be amongst the purebloods if that cannon Dan carried was fired in the chamber.

Dan Granger's attention was on the red head that had been seated at the other side of the court, smart lady that Amelia Bones. He had heard descriptions of the Bulstrode girl but he had taken those with a pinch of salt, seeing her in the flesh left him wondering if those same descriptions weren't on the flattering side. If ever there were to be a campaign against marrying close family members then Millicent Bulstrode would be the poster girl, though it would have to come with a government health warning. She totally dominated the boys every action and even at one point spat into a hanky then proceeded to wipe a dirty mark of the side of his face, Dan remembered his late mother embarrassing him by doing the exact same thing but he was about four at the time.

It suddenly struck Dan that the boy was exactly like his father, anytime Molly was around Arthur's entire conversation consisted of "yes dear" with the word 'no' never being uttered. This girl had just replaced his mother as the person who issued the commands that he blindly obeyed, as they were betrothed he was going to be dominated by this person for the rest of his life. He felt his wife's hand find his as they both reached the same conclusion, his punishment for trying to enslave their daughter was to end up in this one sided relationship where she dictated every facet of his life. Millicent was treating him like a possession in a similar fashion to celebrities with their little dogs; he would be dressed and paraded up and down on her arm but definitely under her thumb and anything else she desired.

Harry and Hermione were ignoring Ron; they had more important business to attend to. Using Voldemort's stored knowledge they were able to identify every death eater who came into the courtroom, the place was packed and had turned into a real media circus – Lord

Harry James Potter and Lord Sirius Orion Black in the same place was big news.

All the Institute staff were sitting together and if trouble started they would do their best to finish it, the exercise eight all wore armour under their robes and Sirius knew to get over there as quick as possible if spells started flying.

Amelia entered last with the raised platform of Wizengamot members now filled as the court settled down, her two favourite aurors walked in front of her before taking their places standing on the floor at either side while she sat on the raised platform. Shacklebolt was earmarked to take over from Amelia as the head of DMLE but wanted to make sure his boss lived long enough to get the reforms they wanted passed through this court, their estimated timetable was two weeks and he was prepared to wait longer if necessary.

The trial developed exactly as they hoped and the Wizengamot retired to reach a verdict after only three hours of watching pensieve memories from the shrieking shack and questioning Sirius under Veritaserum. It should be a mere formality based on the evidence presented, Harry couldn't shake the feeling of imminent danger and had slipped Sirius his wand when the Wizengamot members left to deliberate on his innocence.

They filed back in and Harry could read from Amelia's expression that he was going to like the verdict but the feeling of apprehension just wouldn't go away, the new minister started speaking and had just pronounced Sirius innocent when the shit hit the fan.

Harry noticed that one of the death eaters he was keeping an eye on was not following proceedings but instead looking at a wizard sitting to the right of Amelia, this wizard's sudden movement forced Harry and Hermione into action. The wizard had his wand pointed at Amelia and was uttering a curse as Hermione fired a stunner at him while Harry tried to summon the minister out of the curse's path.

Amelia felt herself being pulled out of her seat just as a beam of green light hit her now vacant chair and large splinters of wood smacked into her back, both legs caught the barrier in front of her but

the force of the exploding chair tipped the new minister over the barrier as she felt at least one of her legs break from being trapped.

Shack and Tonks had been watching the crowd but when Hermione fired off the stunner both whirled round just in time to see their boss come head first over the banister, thankfully Kingsley was able to physically catch Amelia before she hit the floor.

Dan fired his pistol into the air and the unaccustomed noise froze everyone for a split second but that was all they needed, Harry and Hermione had another six wizards down with stunners as he raised his voice to shout above the escalating panic. "STOP! Everyone stay right where you are and the next person that reaches for a wand will be met with something stronger than a stunner."

This really did freeze everyone in place, Harry turned round to call for Poppy but the healer was already on her way to Amelia and Sirius had moved over to stand guarding Poppy with his wand drawn. Harry was livid and only Hermione in his mind was keeping his temper under control, had that killing curse been aimed in their direction there would have been no stopping him. As Harry strode into the middle of the room, cape billowing from the magic pouring off him and the stunned members began being wandlessly levitated to the floor no one was stupid enough to interfere or even put their hands anywhere near a wand. Hermione of course was right by his side.

As the member who'd fired the curse hit the floor Shack looked ready to rip his head off bare-handed until Harry stepped in and pointed to the stunned wizard next to him, "Auror Shacklebolt could you please check this wizard's wand for the last spell it cast."

Shack's attitude changed immediately, it was bad enough to try and assassinate the minister but to use an unforgivable curse to force someone else to do it for you was even worse in his book, the wand was checked in front of the whole Wizengamot and the imperious was the last spell cast. The shocks were not over though as Harry and Hermione started casting spells to remove the sleeves of the stunned members revealing six death eaters while the wizard who cast the killing curse was unmarked.

Harry needed an outlet for his anger and turned on the remaining members, "how can you sit there and allow over ten percent of your members to belong to a fanatical terrorist organisation who must freely commit a murder in their master's presence before Voldemort will accept them. These animals live amongst you and are clearly marked like cattle so why has nothing been done about it?"

"We don't have the laws in place to deal with it," moaned one member before Harry's gaze bore through him.

"This is the Wizengamot, you make the laws so lets make some today!" Hermione watched as her betrothed berated the assembled wizards and witches, she knew opening her mouth would hurt their argument, as she was just an uppity mudblood in their eyes. This time she would have to play the support role to Lord Potter but that didn't mean she couldn't help put words into Harry's mouth.

"We don't have an agenda," a court official said before he also wilted under the young wizard's gaze.

"Your newly appointed head of government is lying bleeding on the floor from a failed assassination attempt and you need an agenda to friggin do something about it! Is it any wonder magical Britain is still in the dark ages when murderers are allowed to walk free because no one has the balls, never mind agenda to stand up to them."

Poppy had done wonders as Amelia was actually back on her feet, "I don't know about balls Lord Potter but I certainly have the agenda, there was a meeting scheduled for tomorrow where every member of the Wizengamot was going to be required to show their arm. Apparently my security isn't as tight as I thought it was as they must have learned of this and came up with a pre-emptive strike, I am indebted to you and your betrothed Lord Potter."

"Minister is there any reason this law cannot be discussed and passed today?"

Shacklebolt had re-stunned and restrained the six death eaters while overriding the lockdown that had went into effect as soon as the

killing curse was fired, allowing about a dozen aurors to flood the chamber, seeing Amelia injured didn't improve their mood.

The teens recognised one of the aurors so Hermione waved her hand, causing all the aurors to lose their right sleeves while Harry stunned and restrained the man before levitating him to join the others.

"It would appear these vermin have infested every corner of our society, how can they walk about freely yet an innocent man gets to spend twelve years in Azkaban?" Harry's anger was beginning to get away from him and the old arsehole in the Wizengamot who kept interrupting with inane comments was seriously not helping.

"What would you have us do Lord Potter? We have to treat people in a civilised manner or we're no better than them. As you rightly pointed out, the attacker was under the imperious curse, some of these people could have been as well"

Harry decided to let them know just what they were dealing with, he revived the seven death eaters and choose a Wizengamot member by the name of Grafton to be levitated into the chair that Sirius had been sitting in only moments before.

"Shack, you have any that truth serum left?"

The old arsehole was now on his feet, "You can't do that, what about his rights?"

"Lets ask that question after he's supplied us with some answers?" Harry nodded to Shack who quickly administered the Veritaserum and the prisoners eyes soon glazed over so Harry began.

"What is your name?"

"George Grafton"

"When did you become a death eater?"

"Third of August, 1978"

“Did you choose this of your own free will?”

“Yes”

“Describe to the court the events of that night when you received your mark.”

“We kidnapped a family that was muggle parents with a mudblood daughter, the Dark Lord had contacts in the ministry who would keep us informed of accidental magic from these freaks so they could be culled. As was usual the woman was raped and tortured while the father and daughter were forced to watch, then we moved on to the daughter who looked about nine.”

The death eater continued to describe the horrendous events though his words were spoken without emotion due to the serum; everyone in the court was struggling to comprehend how someone could carry out such atrocities to another human being, a child at that.

Harry and Hermione were having different problems; they could see the images as the scene played out in their mind. The use of the word freak caused something to snap in Harry and as he watched the horrors unfold it was Emma's face he saw when he looked at the woman who was welcoming the release of death, The husband morphed into Dan who was struggling for all he was worth to escape his bonds but was only providing amusement for the assembled crowd of death eaters. When the young girl who was being stripped morphed into Hermione, Harry couldn't take anymore. “ENOUGH!” The power radiating off him shook the room.

His voice was now hard and as unforgiving as the sharpest steel blade, “is there anyone here who thinks this piece of shit has any rights in our society?”

Not a word was spoken but the overwhelming emotion on display from everyone present was anger, “these bastards were allowed to carry out their own version of genocide while we sat back and let it happen, that could have been your family, that was my family.”

Shack had administered the antidote but George Grafton wasn't too worried, he might have to do some time in Azkaban but his money would get him out before too long.

"If we want to take our country back where decent people can live without the fear of saying someone's name then we have to be prepared to deal with arseholes like this. How can we ever hope to defeat Voldemort if all his followers are allowed to freely roam amongst us, we have the means to find them but we lack the conviction to deal with the problem."

Sirius walked over and joined the teens, ripping the right sleeve off his robe to leave his unmarked arm bare. The rest of the Institute party made their way over and were all missing a sleeve by the time they reached Harry and Hermione. The challenge had been flung down and the public gallery couldn't wait to accept. They had all been ready to run at the first sign of trouble but Lord Potter and his betrothed had dealt with the problem in seconds, now they ripped their robes exposing forearms to the person standing next to them. Amelia Bones had a trickle of blood running down her face as she hobbled over to Harry and ripped her robe before turning to the Wizengamot members, her silent challenge plain for all to see. To a person they stood and tore at their robes, not one dark mark was left amongst them.

"This is the first step to reclaiming our world but it isn't enough, this bastard sitting here thinks his position, heritage and money allows him to rape, torture and murder nine year old children with impunity, well he thought wrong." Harry put his hand out towards Dan and took his pistol, he walked right in front of the still bound death eater, "your wished to become a death eater and today I'm going to make that wish become reality, eat this you sick bastard!" Harry pushed the muzzle of the pistol into the man's mouth and pulled the trigger, blowing the back of the death eater's head off.

He strolled over to the six death eaters lying bound on the floor, they all heard their compatriots confession and had similar stories to tell, by the time Harry got there with Dan's pistol still in his hand they had

all wet and soiled themselves. "These people are terrified of Voldemort for good reason, he's a sick, evil psychopath who would think nothing of killing them if they failed him. We on the other hand give them rights and privileges that their mark says they don't deserve. Voldemort will return but I say we let him come back to a barren desert, no money, no followers and nobody willing to join him because of the consequences they will face." Harry indicated over to the dead George Grafton.

"If we take these steps our country has a chance, if he returns to most of his recourses still in place then heaven help you, because I won't."

Hermione could feel Harry was running on pure adrenalin and that was starting to wane, she would need to get him out of here soon before his actions hit home because this was going to be bad. She had also seen the images and when Harry started seeing the Grangers in their place Hermione was amazed that he actually held it together so well. She had no qualms about what he had just done and in fact Hermione was fighting the urge to take her mother's gun and shoot the six shits who were still lying on the floor. She was going to have to be strong for Harry as this was going to rip him apart.

As he finished speaking Dobby appeared and took both their hands before vanishing them home, blowing the ministry wards apart in the process.

Amber stood as the Institute crew had sprang into action, she had found herself surrounded by people who were ready to fight to protect those like her who couldn't fight back. Watching the Grangers with their guns and seeing the graphic effect a bullet had on a death eater Amber knew what she had to do next. As Harry and Hermione left with Dobby she put her arms round Sirius and kissed his cheek, "I've seen you training in the morning and would like to join, I don't want to be helpless anymore."

He looked into her gorgeous eyes before replying, "I'm afraid you wasted that kiss as it's actually Remus you need to ask, he's the expert on guns."

She kissed his cheek again, "I don't think I wasted it and if I kissed Remus aunt Pomona would be pissed at me, you never want aunt Pomona pissed at you no matter what."

"Thanks for the warning but I had already figured that one out myself."

"Sirius, don't you think we should be heading home?" asked Emma, "I'm really worried about Harry, I only shot that bitch in the shoulder but I felt terrible after it. He must be going through hell."

"They have each other and I suspect that's all they'll need for now, Dobby won't let any harm come to them," Sirius answered.

"You realise that could so easily have been us if Harry hadn't stopped him as a baby."

"So did Harry, that's why that arsehole's dead but by the look in Amelia's eyes this isn't finished yet. Let's take our seats because I've a feeling we're about to see history being made, in fact I would bet you and Dan have already made it by being the first muggles to meet the Wizengamot."

The same old arsehole was heard to mutter, "Are we just going to let him kill a man then leave here as if everything's fine?"

Amelia Bones was on adrenalin high as well, almost being murdered will do it every time. "Johnston you celebrated with the rest of us when that young man defeated Voldemort as a baby, is it just the fact that this happened in front of you that upsets your outdated moral belief that these animals deserve better treatment. I propose that aurors be given the right to ask ANY citizen of magical Britain to roll up there sleeve, do I have a second?"

"Minister Bones!" came the shout from the public gallery, "could we change that to any citizen can ask, rather than just the aurors. This is our country and it's about time we reclaimed it."

The roar of approval that followed this remark was more than she could have hoped for, Amelia had deliberately stopped her aurors from moving the body as she planned to railroad through some drastic measures and it would do no harm for their to be a reminder of what they were up against. Using a dead death eater as a visual aid might be considered unethical but the bastards had tried to kill her, leaving Susan an orphan, so screw ethics and full steam ahead. "I agree with that change with the proviso that we don't have kangaroo courts taking place up some back alley, justice will be administered only in this room." She looked towards the body leaving no doubt in anyone's minds what she meant by justice before turning back to the Wizengamot, "all in favour say aye!"

It was unanimous, as was the law waiving death eater's rights so they immediately received a trial under truth serum and the final law passed stated that any death eater who had committed rape or murder would face a mandatory death sentence. Sirius was right, history was made and the magical world was changed forever.

The body was then removed and the death eater Auror took it's place in the chair, as Shack was about to administer the serum the now ex-Auror made a plea, "Minister Bones, I freely admit I made a serious error of judgement when I was younger and have worked tirelessly trying to atone. I plead guilty willingly accept whatever fate the court decides but would like to spare my family the details of my crimes."

Amelia looked at the man she had worked along side and trusted with her life in the field, she had trouble equating his actions with that of a death eater but the mark was there and he had plead guilty. "Are you aware that this is a mandatory death sentence you're pleading guilty to?"

He held his head up, "Yes and I deserve it, I only wish to spare my wife and son the details."

She glanced amongst the members and nobody seemed to have any objections so she passed sentence, "the court accepts your plea of guilty, you shall be placed through the veil of death tonight at eight o'clock, take him away."

The other five death eaters all started spouting information, trying to shout over each other in the hope of getting a lighter sentence. Rather than mess about with silencing charms Shack just stunned four of them while the fifth was placed in the chair.

Every Auror in the ministry had been called to the chamber and required at wand point to show their arm and thankfully there were no more death eaters, the Aurors then began to leave in teams of three to arrest every name the death eaters in the chair gave them.

By the time they had finished with the five former members the first Aurors were returning with their prisoner, standing on no ceremony they were strapped into the chair and administered serum.

Amelia was beginning to feel the effects of her near miss but a pepper-up potion was keeping her going, they were achieving more here today than they had in decades.

They called a halt to the proceedings at three o'clock with eighteen death eaters sentenced to death that night and another five names being hunted by her Aurors. She planned on trying every inmate of Azkaban by the same method to eliminate the death eaters and assure herself there were no more "Sirius Black's" serving time for crimes they didn't commit. Between today efforts and the purge on Snape's information she felt at last they might be getting on top of the situation, walking through the ministry Amelia had to smile at the last nail in the death eater's coffin. Every single person was wearing robes with a sleeve missing, this statement of innocence would spread throughout their world like wildfire and before the week was out anyone wearing both sleeves would be repeatedly challenged at wand point to show their arm.

-oOoOo-

Hermione led Harry into their bedroom and led was the operative word; he had started going into shock almost as soon as they arrived home. He just stood there as she removed his clothes before placing him in bed; she then undressed and joined him before pulling her betrothed tightly into a hug.

He was unresponsive until speaking over the bond, 'Hermione how can you bare to touch me, didn't you see what I did to that defenceless man!'

Hermione spoke back to him, "Harry there no longer is me, I, or you – only we and us. Of course I saw what you did and the fact I made no attempt to stop you surely tells that I agreed with your decision. I saw the same vision as you and if Voldemort hadn't been stopped by baby Harry Potter that version of history would probably have come true."

'I thought I was loosing you again, I won't let that happen I swear I won't.'

"You could never loose me Harry, we're together for all time like your mum and dad."

This seemed to be the right thing to say as his arms slowly wrapped round Hermione as he sobbed holding the girl he loved more than life, slowly crying himself to sleep holding onto the one person in the world he relied on.

Harry awoke with a strange feeling until he remembered where he was and why his betrothed was wrapped in his embrace, after a while he gradually relaxed before finding his voice, "eh Hermione, did you know we were both lying here naked?"

She smiled at him, "Harry I can tell you the exact second you discovered it, I'm sorry but it's rude to point."

They both laughed before snuggling into each other, "Harry, your birthday is in twelve days but I really don't want to wait any longer." She started to kiss away any semblance of sense the boy had left.

"Well if you're sure..." no more words were used or needed.

Dobby was outside their bedroom door casting silencing and locking charms that Dumbledore would struggle to break, his charges were going to be given the time alone they needed to heal.

-oOoOo-

Millie and Ron had left the trial soon after Harry and Hermione, making their way down Diagon Alley. She noted her betrothed was seemingly in another world and this really scared the large Slytherin, Millicent wasn't stupid and knew she had taken advantage of the handsome Gryffindor. Being betrothed to someone her own age was a bonus she didn't expect but the pureblood by her side was far beyond her wildest dreams and she was so happy she could burst.

Watching his reactions when he saw his friends had left her confused so Millicent asked the one question she really didn't want answered, unfortunately she was falling in love him and couldn't live without knowing the truth. "Ron, would you rather be with Hermione than me? Is that why you're so quiet?"

The question shocked Ron but not nearly as much as the answer did his betrothed, "are you serious? Did you see what they did in that courtroom, what he did! Hanging around with those two is a one-way ticket to an early grave; you wouldn't believe some of the shit they put me through. If it's a choice between them or you then I've made my decision and will gladly be sticking with you."

Ron's feet actually left the ground as an ecstatic Millie engulfed her betrothed and gave him the snog of his life in the middle of a busy Diagon Alley.

Ron's feet were still of the ground as he put his arms round his betrothed and started to return he kiss, the image of the back of that death eater's head being blown off was a startling reminder that there were a lot worse things in life than being betrothed to Millicent Bulstrode.

-oOoOo-

It was late when the two finally left their bedroom and headed towards the terrace in search of some supper, they could easily have had something brought to their room but understood people would be worried about them. Harry was now more worried about Dan and Emma finding out that they hadn't waited till they were married than

the group's reaction to his performance in court, this caused Hermione to smile as that was why she had pushed him earlier, well one of the reasons anyway.

They walked in and Harry was accosted by two blurs, one with long blond hair and the other red with black streaks as both began to kiss him all over his face. Hermione chuckled at Harry's discomfort, "should I be getting worried here girls?"

It was Luna who answered, "I just want Harry to know our feelings haven't changed because of today, I still love him." She gave him another kiss before holding him in a tight hug.

"Hey, I just thought it was a good excuse to get to kiss Harry!" Ginny Weasley would have meant those words but coming from Ginny Pomfrey her friends understood she was trying to lighten the mood.

Neville also kept it light, "sorry mate, you know I love you but I really prefer blonds so no kisses from me."

Harry was mortified though when Augusta came over and gave him a hug and kiss, "young man what you did today has set our world on a course that will eventually eradicate the evil that is Voldemort and his followers. The houses of Potter and Longbottom have been allies for generations and I for one hope this is a tradition that can be continued."

"Madam Longbottom, Neville is our brother in all but name and between us we hope to continue the tradition for a few more generations yet." Harry was tearing up and when he saw Emma approach him in the same condition they held each other and let them flow.

"Harry that man was pure evil, I was ready to shoot him myself."

"Mum when he was talking I started imagining you and dad with Hermione in the same position, I will not let anyone harm my family and if I have to become an outcast to achieve that then I'm willing to pay the price."

Dan had joined his wife in holding the young man who was now their son in every way that mattered, "I was imagining the same as you Harry, thinking of all the witches and wizards who never got the chance to discover who they were before being brutally murdered. These are not just statistics anymore, kids like the Creeveys, little Natalie MacDonald and even our Hermione wouldn't be alive today if you hadn't stopped him as a baby. I know what it cost you to do that today and I wish that I could have pulled the trigger in your place but Harry Potter doing it changed your world."

Harry looked confused until Sirius led the group over to the table so they could get some much needed food into them before he would explain, "when you left it was a pretty pissed Amelia Bones who rounded on the Wizengamot and Merlin did she get some changes made. You can now legally be asked by anyone to lift up your sleeve and prove you don't have the dark mark, if you do then it's straight to trial with Veritaserum and the guilty are sentenced to death. I don't see you becoming an outcast any time soon."

Dobby popped in and actually looked embarrassed, "Minister Bones would like to speak with you, she's been asking for hours but I told her you were unavailable at the moment."

Hermione could feel Harry's apprehension; he actually expected to be arrested. "You did the right thing Dobby, could you fetch her now please?" It was a smiling Dobby who popped away to obey his mistress's command.

"Dobby told us the same thing, just what were you up to?" The smirk on Sirius's face grew wider the redder Harry got but he hadn't reckoned with Hermione.

"I'm sorry Sirius but we can't tell you, it would be considered cruelty to dumb animals to make an old dog jealous."

If anything Harry's face got redder at the accompanying laughter but he calmed down a fair bit noticing that Dan and Emma were joining in

and not trying to murder him, Hermione had both arms around him with her head on his shoulder when Amelia arrived with Dobby.

The Grangers and Sirius followed their charges as they escorted the minister into their study for a meeting as Dobby served tea while they waited to see what the minister of magic wanted, the fact that Shack and Tonks weren't here let Harry relax on the arrest issue.

As usual Amelia wasn't one for small talk and got straight down to business, "Lord Potter you will face no charges for what transpired today as I and many others believe you did the magical world a very big favour by giving it a kick up the arse. All the death eaters that you and Miss Granger exposed today have been tried, sentenced and executed under the new wizarding law your actions allowed to be formed."

Harry was visibly relieved that he wasn't going to be facing any charges and once again Hermione had her arms round him with her head on his shoulder, their actions this afternoon seemed to have done the almost impossible task off making them even closer.

"On a more personal note I would like to thank you both for saving my life today in more ways than you know," Amelia opened her robes and lifted her jumper showing a dragon hide vest. "The money you gifted the auror department will mean that all our operatives will have one of these as standard issue in a matter of days. Poppy told me some of the splinters that impacted into my back would have done serious damage but for this vest. We have also tripled our intake of recruits this year and next leaving me a lot more confident about our future than I was a few months ago."

Harry and Hermione were pleased that things were working out so well but felt Amelia hadn't got to the real reason for her visit yet though thought that would soon change, they weren't wrong.

"Now we come to the problem I have and the real reason for my visit, it's plain to me that you have an incredibly accurate source of information that I don't. All six members you stunned after the attack

were death eaters and I found myself asking how you could know when all my entire department had was a few unsubstantiated rumours. There is not a shred of doubt in my mind that we're on the same side but as minister there must be things we can work on together to resolve this with as little loss to our side as possible."

The all understood Amelia wasn't asking for any political or personal gain, she felt every auror loss personally and was willing to do anything to eradicate those visits where you had to tell somebody their loved one had been killed in the line of duty.

"Minister we have a plan that hopefully will meet that criteria and we will gladly accept your help when the time is right, recent events may have put those plans beyond salvage at which point we will certainly bring you into our full confidence as we try to end this. Our generation has known relative peace and we hope to finish off Voldemort so the peace will extend to our children and beyond, at the moment only Hermione and I know the plan and that's the way it's got to stay for now but that doesn't mean we can't work together or share information."

They had been discussing it over their bond just what they could tell the only person in the ministry they trusted, "minister the horcruxes that you became aware of have been found and destroyed bar one, Voldemort has a very large snake as a familiar that he's made a horcrux. The snake is always with him but can be killed like any other animal, which will leave him mortal. Before you start organising search parties there's a very important fact that you need to be aware of, it's been prophesised that he can only die by Harry's hand." Hermione's words had Amelia's head whipping round to face Harry for confirmation.

He nodded and Hermione continued, "if your aurors come into contact with him they need to get out of there as quick as possible, take a shot at the snake if they get the chance but don't engage Voldemort in a fight they can't win."

Amelia found herself lost for words for one of the few times in her life, to anyone else that would be a death sentence but his friends and family had all rallied behind this extraordinary young man and she

actually believed he could pull it off. She was trying very hard not to imagine Susan in the same predicament; even with her as minister it was very doubtful they would get a positive outcome.

“Lord Potter I can only wish you well and reiterate my offer that I will swing the whole weight of the ministry behind you, all that’s required is to ask and if it’s within my power it’s yours.”

“How would you like to capture a death eater whose escape from Azkaban was masterminded and carried out by a high ranking ministry official?” Harry’s question had Amelia on the edge of her seat, eyes burning with righteous indignation.

“Please tell me more Lord Potter.”

-oOoOo-

When Roy MacDonald had confirmed Natalie was going to be attending Potter Institute he had politely asked the young lord if there was anything he could do to repay his generosity. The answer had Roy chuckling and he was still laughing as he gladly granted Harry’s request, the form in front of him was Natalie’s acceptance letter for Hogwarts. He had ticked the box to indicate his daughter would not be attending and in the space provided to give a reason he wrote ‘taking the PISS’. He placed the form into the envelope provided for muggle parents and wished he could see the face of the person who opened it.

Please review

Chapter19

Harry lay in bed with his arms wrapped around his naked sleeping betrothed and wondered how he could every be worthy of the gift she had given him, he wanted to do something to say to the world just how much he loved her but it would have to be something that couldn't be bought off the shelf. Unlike most teenage boys Harry had the world at his fingertips and could give her anything she wanted but things and belongings didn't impress Hermione, it was deeds that spoke loudly to her.

He suddenly recalled a part of their conversation with Amelia last night; the minister had stayed for hours and was now considered a good friend. The more he thought about it the more he was sure it would be something that would show her just how much she meant to him so he carefully untangled himself before heading for his writing desk. Ten minutes later with a whispered summons for Dobby and his plan was in motion, he also decided to get Hermione a gold locket as well - just to be on the safe side.

-oOoOo-

Percy Weasley woke bright and early, eager for the day to begin. His new fiancée was lying beside him and he thought life just couldn't get much better, their engagement had appeased Penelope's parents and the fact that they both had dream jobs and were going to marry at Christmas removed all objections they had to them living together at Hogwarts. Originally they were not going to say anything but with Penelope's young sister being a second year it would only be a matter of time before the Hogwarts rumour mill picked up on the fact they had adjoining rooms and were a couple. They thought that the Clearwaters should hear it from them rather than their younger daughter the first time she lost points or got a detention from either of the couple.

Percy glanced over towards his desk with the large pile of letters it contained and sighed, the headmaster had given them the job of assisting in the running of Hogwarts and they were going to have to let him know they were stuck. A large pile of letters had 'taking the PISS' written on them and neither of the purebloods had any idea

what it meant, their best guess had been a replacement course for OWL's so you would sit your PISS's and then your NEWT's. The problem with that was both he and Penny were now professors and if there were new courses being offered they needed to know about it now so they could have time to work out how they were going to teach PISS next term.

-oOoOo-

Dumbledore had to use memory charms on his two new heads of house, when he had seen the letters his reaction had shocked and frightened the former head girl and boy. He was now back under control in kindly godfather mode and thanking them both for all their hard work, with the suggestion that a trip to Diagon Alley was in order as a reward for their sterling efforts, they had no sooner shut the door than the air was turning blue from over one hundred and fifty years worth of learning curse words.

He was going through the letters when one name jumped out at him, Susan Bones was taking the PISS and the letter in question was signed by her legal guardian, Amelia Bones. He had a direct floo line into the ministers office that Cornelius had installed so they could keep in touch, he would floo call first then go over and get this sorted out once and for all. No one took the piss out of Albus Brian Wulfric Percival Dumbledore!

-oOoOo-

Amelia was sitting at her desk when Dumbledore's head appeared in the fireplace, now if ever there was a way to ruin your morning then that was it.

"Amelia do you mind if I pop over? I have an urgent matter that I would like your help with."

"Actually Headmaster, it's Minister Bones and I'm sorry but my schedule is rather full. If you wish you can ask my secretary and see if she can make an appointment when my schedule clears up a bit."

Amelia had a good idea what the old goat wanted and that was confirmed by his next statement.

“Are you aware minister that a large proportion of Hogwarts students, including your niece have chosen not to return this year?”

Amelia was left wondering if this man had any common sense at all, “Since my niece vowed on her magic never to return to Hogwarts I hardly think that should be surprising Headmaster. In the current political climate and considering the level of education on offer at your school I would be amazed if there weren’t a lot more disgruntled parents removing their children from the castle.”

Albus had forgot that she was one of the traitors who had stood up that morning; his entire focus had been on Harry. He was not about to let Amelia away with the level of education jibe though, “Hogwarts is still one of the premier magical schools in the world, and our reputation speaks for itself.”

Amelia was beginning to enjoy this, not least of all because she knew the old goat’s knees must have been killing him by now from kneeling down to put his head in the fire. “Headmaster, Hogwarts is the premier magical school in Britain because it’s the only magical school in Britain, the rest of Europe has overtaken us in the last decade or so. I fear that the upcoming tournament will show this to be true and admire your courage for putting your reputation on this event, it could get really embarrassing for you and Hogwarts.”

Even through the green flames Amelia could see his face turning red with anger, especially when she held up her hand to prevent him speaking while she answered her mobile phone. “Hello Lord Potter....see me today, why I don’t think that will be a problem at all, how long do you need?Including lunch? ...Ok that should be no problem, I’ll have my secretary move appointments to clear my morning and see you soon...bye for now.” She could hear Harry laughing on the other end of the line, he obviously figured out there was somebody she wanted to annoy by letting him or her know who she was talking to; Amelia was looking forward to telling him the full story later.

Dumbledore was having a really hard time controlling his temper, this woman was openly baiting him and with that upstart Potter to boot. "Minister, do you really think 'taking the piss' is a good enough reason to damage your niece's education?"

"Damage?" asked Amelia, "oh you must have misunderstood, Susan is attending the establishment that's about to become the premier magical school in Europe. I can assure you her education will be far in advance of anything on offer at Hogwarts, this school is full of experienced professors and all the students love it there."

"What!" Albus was starting to lose it now and was actually shouting, "Hogwarts has the charter to be the only magical school in Britain, and even the minister can't change that."

"I never said the school was in Britain and you would be surprised what the minister, with the weight of the people behind her can achieve. Good day to you headmaster." She ended the call and immediately asked her secretary to have the direct line to Hogwarts removed, that privilege would be reserved for people she actually wanted to talk to.

-oOoOo-

Percy and Penelope were sitting having ice cream when he suddenly exploded out his chair and had his wand pointing at two young girls.

Susan and Hannah had been walking down the alley proudly displaying their Institute t-shirts as well as their other assets when the former head boy suddenly appears in front of them with his wand drawn. The girls were actually frightened, as he looked more deranged than angry, when he demanded they remove their t-shirts that got them really scared.

Percy was livid, how anyone could deface the image of Professor Dumbledore was beyond him and when he saw the name Potter, he just snapped. He needed one of these to take to the professor to tell him about PISS. Percy was waiting on them giving him the items

when the point of a wand pressed into the back of his neck and a voice he hated spoke quietly to him.

“Mr Weasley, could you please explain to me why you have your wand pointed at two of my friends and demanding the girls remove an article of clothing?” Harry was standing with Hermione and an older couple where Percy could see them so the wand at his neck must belong to someone else but his anger transcended logic.

“This is none of your business Potter, she’s wearing that item that degrades a great man and a wonderful institution. She should be arrested!”

“Percy that great man appointed you head of Gryffindor in that once wonderful institution, McGonagall cried when we told her and not from being happy about it. Now the head of Gryffindor is standing in the middle of Diagon Ally demanding at wand point that two teenage girls remove their tops, did I forget to mention that one of those girls is the niece of our current minister and that wand in your neck is being held there by an Auror on protection detail.”

All colour drained from Percy’s face as he suddenly realised the seriousness of his situation while Harry wandlessly summoned the red heads wand before handing it to the Auror.

Harry put his arms round both girls, “are you both alright?” their nods indicated they were still a bit shaken. “We’re having lunch at the Ambrosia Cottage later, would you care to join us at about one o’clock?”

“How did you get a reservation there? It’s usually booked solid.” Hannah asked.

“Apparently the Potters have there own table.” Harry answered.

“We’ll be there!” said Susan as she waved to the Grangers and dragged Hannah towards the floo, Institute t-shirts were fine for the alley but not Ambrosia Cottage, even her aunt had to wait for a reservation there.

The group watched as Percy was led away while a nervous Penelope followed on behind, Dan shook his head “are you sure Ginny is related to them?”

It was Hermione, who knowingly answered, “trust us dad, we got her away from them just in time. The Ginny of a few years from now was not a nice person, Bill and Charlie seemed to have escaped the worse of it but Dumbledore encouraged their greed and they all willingly went along with him.”

The group left to visit Gringotts as they never got the chance the day before, Harry wanted to make certain everything was arranged for their honeymoon and now had some other business to deal with.

-oOoOo-

Albus finished speaking to Penelope on the floo before letting his temper go and practically wrecking his office, not only was his new head of Gryffindor arrested but that bastard Potter had the audacity to open another school in direct competition to him. He was certain that Minerva, Pomona and Filius would be teaching there and probably that bloody werewolf as well, this now explained the rather large pile of refusals and the smug look on the face of that bitch Bones.

He was sorely tempted to get one of the students and use legilimency on them to discover what he needed to know but that prat Weasley had shown their hand and, even worse got caught doing it. All he knew was that the school wasn't in Britain so any contacts he had would be useless to him, he decided to floo call some of the key businesses in Diagon Alley to see if they had any information.

Half an hour later and it was an even more confused headmaster who cleared a space amidst the destruction to sit down, Flourish and Blott's, Madam Malkin's, the apothecary and even Ollivander's were all reporting a large drop in business from Hogwarts students, they had all seen the children wearing their t-shirts but apparently the only place in the Alley those students spent money was Fortescue's ice cream parlour.

Madam Malkin had worryingly reported that rumours of the new school providing all the students books, robes and equipment would appear to be true. She had heard disgruntle parents discussing it and bemoaning the fact that their children were not accepted for the school, this would have a seriously detrimental effect on most of the businesses in Diagon Alley but that wasn't what worried Albus. If Potter was taking his pick of students with the promise of freebies, who would that leave to attend Hogwarts? The thought of a school full of Students that Potter had rejected made the old wizard so angry that all the former headmasters fled their portraits.

When he eventually regained enough control of his anger, Albus started using his magic to tidy his office and place the letters on his repaired desk. He would have to go through them and see just how badly Hogwarts was going to be effected; Bone's comments about him being embarrassed in front of the other schools now had him in a cold sweat. The thought of the other two schools turning up with the cream of their students to find a half empty Hogwarts with only the dregs Potter had left him was a terrifying prospect, he started sorting the letters into groups.

-oOoOo-

The four were shown into Amelia's office and led towards a comfortable seating area; the minister joined them carrying a large book. "Lord and Lady Potter, Mr and Mrs Granger before we start there is something I need to show you because it will have a bearing on all future discussions."

She laid the book on a table and gestured for everyone to read a certain entry

Harry James Potter and Hermione Jean Granger - bond completed
6th June, 1994 10.07pm

The four looked to Amelia for an explanation of what they were reading, "this book magically records all soul bonded couples and yours, by some strange coincidence, completed the same night that Sirius Black escaped from a locked room, a condemned Hippogriff disappeared right under the minister and Dumbledore's noses while

someone gave the Dementors such a scare they refuse to leave Azkaban Island. In short Hermione has been Lady Potter since that night.”

A very loud silence greeted this news so Amelia continued, “in the wizarding world a soul bond is the highest form of commitment a couple can give to each other, it’s extremely rare and a kiss is usually all that is required between soul mates to complete the bond. The second this takes place the couple are considered married in law and nothing can change that.”

Harry turned to Hermione with a giant smile on his face, “do you understand what this means Lady Potter?”

Hermione answered over their bond, her mind working at a rate of knots ‘that we were bonded in the last timeline, no wonder we knew what each other was going to do...the rings have sped up the process of our link but masked the fact we were soul bonded...that’s why we both ended up with your parents, oh Harry even in death we couldn’t be parted!’

He never got to say anymore as overwhelming feelings of love flooded their bond and his wife attacked him with hugs and kisses, ‘I was going to say, before being interrupted that this means we didn’t break our promise to mum and dad, we were married at the time. I hadn’t even considered anything else but my beautiful wife once more amazed me with her brilliance.’

Emma shook her head and asked the practical question, “When you two are quite finished what are we going to do about your wedding next week?”

“Oh that can still go ahead,” said Amelia “though it will probably take the form of a blessing now as they’re already married to each other. When I watched them last night I thought it was a possibility and the book has now confirmed this, congratulations Lord and Lady Potter.”

Dan and Emma were now hugging their children and even battle hardened Amelia Bones had a tear in her eye as she watched the happy event unfold in front of her, she was now positive that the

young couple could communicate without speaking and it was this suspicion that had her check the book in the first place.

They all eventually sat back down and only the setting stopped Hermione sitting on her husband's knee, it was the minister of magic's office after all.

"Can I assume this changes some of the things you are here for today?" Amelia asked.

"Yes," Hermione answered, "we were originally going to make arrangements to sit our NEWT's to gain as much legality as we could for our magical status but this negates the problem, we are legally married and emancipated in the eyes of our world. A soul bound is undisputable and anyone interfering with it will find himself or herself in serious trouble. We don't need bits of paper indicating our intelligence so we will pass at the moment, they can always be sat at later date."

Emma couldn't believe what she was hearing from her studious daughter, "are you sure about this Hermione? I can't believe you don't want to take exams."

"Mum, Harry and I don't need jobs as such and Lady Potter will be able to achieve so much more than Hermione Granger with twenty NEWT's. We've got the Institute up and running and are now concentrating on finishing Voldemort, waving our NEWT results at him won't get the job done."

Harry chuckled at the thought of Voldemort dieing of shame when his wife beat Riddle's scores in NEWT's, "would it be possible for my wife and I to sit our apparition exams today, our licences would also prove we were legally of age."

They both now saw what it meant to have the ministry on their side as an hour later they were being presented licences for standard, international and side-along apparition having passed the tests with ease.

“I think it’s time to deal with our other business now, don’t you Lord Potter?” You could actually see the mischief behind Amelia’s smile and it was a hesitant Hermione who held onto the portkey provided.

-oOoOo-

Jillian Green sat at her desk wondering how she was going to make the books balance for the month, this was not a problem with her excellent accounting skills merely that the amount of money coming in was insufficient to meet the running costs. The obvious business answer was to cut her costs but how do you explain to children that they couldn’t eat today as the orphanage had to cut costs.

A knock at the door and Betty popped her head round to say they had visitors, Jillian usually hated this as the good and the great got to tour the facilities, get a photo taken for the press with a few orphans and then leave a few Galleons to ease their conscience. She would just have to smile and bear it as even ten Galleons could make a big difference this month, a lot of purebloods had dropped off the map and though their contributions were meagre to say the least the children got to have food on their plates.

When Amelia Bones walked in she was surprised but when she introduced the two couples with her Jillian wasn’t sure what was going on, fifteen minutes later and she had trouble remembering her own name and kept pinching herself to see she wasn’t dreaming.

It was straight after the introductions and the group having been seated on some thread worn, mismatched chairs when the first bombshell hit, Harry Potter apparently didn’t mess about.

“In conversation with Amelia last night she was thanking us for saving her niece from ending up here, she had nothing but praise for you and your staff but from my initial investigations I know that the orphanage is under severe financial pressure. What I’m proposing is that the orphanage becomes part of the newly formed Granger Foundation where it will be relocated to a more suitable building, have all it’s bills taken care of with you and your staff actually being paid a decent salary.”

“Just how ‘newly formed’ is this Granger Foundation and what does it do?” Hermione asked her sneaky husband.

“The Granger Foundation is my wedding present to my wife, it’s a charity organisation that can circumvent red tape and provide help directly where it’s needed. It has Lady Hermione Jean Potter as Chairperson with Dan and Emma Granger as board members. I won’t go into business details here other than to say my information is that the orphanage needs help now, waiting until we came back from honeymoon might have been too late.”

Jillian couldn’t believe what she was witnessing and, but for the presence of her friend Amelia Bones, would have thought this was some sort of cruel prank. Hearing Lord Potter sum up their situation only made her nod in defeat, they might just make it to the end of this month but she couldn’t see them reaching the end of August.

“One of the main problems is the rent you pay for this building, while I know it’s not an exorbitant amount it’s still more than you can comfortably afford. Should you accept this offer then the first order of business is to move you out of here into a building that will be owned by the orphanage and administered by the Foundation, you will of course still be in charge of the day to day running of the place as everyone agrees you’re very good at your job. As with the Potter Institute you will be given a vault to cover the running costs and any major purchases get discussed with the foundation. Are there any questions so far?”

Hermione just grabbed her husband and kissed him senseless while Jillian looked to Amelia for confirmation that this was real, her friend’s broad smile assured her that it was.

The strangest house elf Jillian had ever seen appeared next to the Potters, he was dressed in camouflage fatigues with patches on both shoulders and sergeant stripes on his arm. She was sure one of the patches was the Potter family emblem but the other with the snowy owl had her confused, every pocket of his fatigues was bulging with Merlin knows what.

“Ah Dobby,” said Harry “how goes the restoration work?”

“We are ripping out old masters study as it would make a great play room for the children,” the mischievous glint in his eye was unmistakable.

“I think you’re enjoying this a bit too much Dobby, Have you moved all the books?”

“Oh yes Harry sir, they’re all in the Institute with Professor Lupin sorting them after checking they’re safe.”

The penny had finally dropped for Hermione, “you’re turning Malfoy Manor into an orphanage?”

“It seemed so fitting, don’t you agree?” Harry cheekily asked.

Hermione and Amelia seemed to think so as they were almost bent double with laughter while the experience left Jillian Green practicing her goldfish impression, her mind just couldn’t cope with the frequency and magnitude of the shocks coming her way.

“I understand there are three children here who are of age to attend school, all will be guaranteed places at the Potter Institute and all expenses met by us.”

Jillian looked towards the young wizard who was practically their saviour and asked a question she really didn’t want to, “Lord Potter, won’t the children be picked-on for belonging to an orphanage?”

It was as if the young wizard had grown a foot taller while his eyes bored right into her soul before completing the effect with a voice that brokered no argument, “not in my school they won’t, one of the few school rules is no bigotry of any kind. Whether their parents are gentry or no longer with us the students will all be treated the same, I think it’s rather fitting that orphans will be attending a school founded by one of their own.”

Harry could feel his family drawing round him to offer support and couldn't stay angry for long, "I apologise Miss Green but that was one of the main reasons we broke away from Hogwarts, a very good friend of ours was having her stay there made into a living hell by people bullying her. It will never be allowed to find a toe hold in a school bearing my name."

Jillian had asked because in better times they had scraped enough money together to allow one of their brightest children to attend Hogwarts, she hadn't made it passed the Christmas holidays and refused to return. Her dealings with the headmaster had left a sour taste in her mouth, it was almost like 'she's an orphan, what do you expect'.

Harry noticed that Dobby was still present, worse he was nervously moving from one foot to the other in a clearly agitated manner. "What's the problem Dobby?" Harry asked.

Dobby had his head down and was almost muttering so he had to strain to hear, "Harry Potter once said Dobby could ask him for favour."

Harry knelt down to bring himself level with his little friend, "Dobby just tell me what's got you so worked up and then we'll see what can be done about it."

The expression of sheer adulation on Dobby's face would have put the Creeveys to shame, "last night the Aurors took away Mr Crouch, he was very angry and blamed his elf, giving her clothes before they took him away. Winky is a good elf but believes no one will want her now and has been crying all night, Dobby hates to see her like that and was wondering if..."

"Winky!" Harry said as a tiny elf showing clear signs of emotional distress appeared with a pop beside Dobby. "My friend Dobby here has told us what happened and you're now looking for work, would you like to come and work for us Winky? It would be the same conditions as Dobby though."

The little female elf looked unsure, "Winky was hoping for a family."

Harry just smiled, “we are a family and Dobby is part of that family, in the future my wife and I hope to have children and would need someone to look after them as well.”

Winky was torn, the idea of children made her heart race with joy. “Would Winky have to wear the same as Dobby?”

Hermione couldn’t contain her laughter and she to knelt down beside the elves, “Winky there is no way we would ask you to wear the same as Dobby, though we would like you to wear a dress or robe as a uniform, not clothes.”

Dobby took Winky’s hand in his, “Harry and Hermione are very kind and I would like you to come as well.”

The first smile any of them had seen broke out on her face as she nodded her agreement and the Potter family had grown again.

“Dobby take as long as you need to show Winky around and can you take her for whatever uniform she wants, remember it’s what she wants Dobby.”

Winky thought her new mistress was chastising Dobby but when she saw the both of them smile that was clearly not the case; this was going to take some getting used to.

Both elves disappeared but Jillian Green had seen and heard enough, “Lord Potter I would be honoured and delighted to take you up on the very generous offer made for the orphanage.”

“Splendid, why don’t we get everyone out to the Institute this Saturday for a few days and that will allow the children a holiday while we prepare their new home for occupation. You and your staff can help design the rooms to best suit your needs as the elves are just cleaning and restoring at the moment.”

They were on a tour of the orphanage but news of Harry Potter being in the building had spread like wildfire; the children were all desperate

to meet him. Hermione felt that the whole place made her think of Remus before he came to work for them, everything was used and worn but spotlessly clean with everyone trying their hardest to make the best of what little they had. She didn't know it was possible for a place to be depressing and uplifting at the same time, when Harry knelt to speak to some of the younger children she had tears in her eyes.

Jillian misunderstood the tears, "I realise this must not be quite what you're used to Lady Potter but we try to do our best with what we have."

Hermione shook her head, trying to control the thoughts coming from her husband, "I'm sorry Miss Green, my husband was just wishing he had been sent here in stead of his aunt's. A person only has to walk the corridors to feel the love you and your staff have for these children, Harry was nearly twelve before he got his first hug and that was from me. He's only known about being Lord Potter for a short while and he has spent that time trying to help people, how could anyone not love him?"

Emma hugged her daughter from behind while Jillian struggled with the idea that Harry Potter would rather have come here, she watched him as he charmed all the children.

Harry noticed a young girl who looked afraid to approach him, she had a rolled up sheet of paper and he was quite sure he knew what it was so waved her over.

Eight-year-old Joan forced herself to go over to her hero and couldn't even speak, she just handed him the poster.

Harry unrolled it to find it matched the rest of the orphanage, worn and frayed around the edges but treated with love and care. "What's your name?" Harry asked.

He received a muffled 'Joan' before he reached out and lifted her chin so she was looking at him, "Joan, you and every one here are invited to my house for a holiday while we get a new building ready for you to live in. While you're there we can get our photograph taken together

and I'll sign that for you, 'to my friend Joan – love Harry' – will that do?"

She managed to nod her head before bursting into tears and launching herself into Harry's arms, he stood with Joan in his arms just before the rest of the children all joined the rapidly expanding group hug.

Harry noticed Emma and Jillian were crying but the look Hermione was giving him lifted his heart into the stratosphere and confirmed he was right to do this, he could have given his wife the British Crown Jewels and not got this reaction.

When the kids had calmed down the reality that they would be going on holiday kicked in and Jillian had forty-two hyper orphans on her hands, they had very little idea where Italy was but a swimming pool and private beach needed no explanation. Harry had left her a thousand galleons to 'tide them over to Saturday' and told her not to worry about clothes for the children, they would be taking them shopping when they got there.

Harry's comments before he left raised her opinion of him even more.

"Since making the discovery I was famous I can honestly say I've hated every part of my fame, watching Joan treat a poster of me like her greatest treasure was a truly humbling experience. If she can draw any semblance of comfort from it, then who am I to say that it's wrong and better than a poster of Voldemort!"

-oOoOo-

Connie Hammer sat in the boat more convinced than ever that she really needed to control her temper or learn not to speak when angry. She thought back to what caused her present predicament and still found she wouldn't have changed a thing, calling the then minister Cornelius Fudge a 'bumbling arsehole' to his face when they received word that dementors had boarded the Hogwarts express was one of the defining moments of her life.

Unfortunately Fudge didn't take to kindly to the truth and thought it was perfectly acceptable to place those monsters around a school full of children, he was also a small, petty man and only her friend Amelia Bones had saved her job though could do nothing about the demotion. Only the promotion of his nephew to her old job appeased the arsehole enough for her to remain an auror, Amelia had then rightly torn a strip off her for being so bloody stupid and assigned her to the junior arsehole's squad hoping to try and limit the damage he could do.

Donald Carrick was everything she despised in an auror, it was always the easiest option that was taken and corners cut to suit the junior arseholes needs. Today was a prime example; for a few days now they had been transferring death eaters from Azkaban to the ministry so they could stand trial and the regulations clearly stated no more than two prisoners at a time were permitted in the boat. Don' had a hot date for tonight and didn't want to spend the extra time it would take for two trips to transport the last three death eaters so was cutting corners again, the fact that all three death eaters had the last name Lestrangle just compounded the error.

Every auror in the department, apart from the bold Don' knew as soon as Shackbolt took over the department Carrick would probably find himself behind a desk at best, he thought he had a shot at the department head job. She could see the flawed logic behind his assumption; if his useless arsehole of an uncle could make minister of magic then there was hope for him, but only in his tiny mind!

Connie wanted to stun Rabastan, Rudolphus and Bellatrix for the entire journey but Carrick had laughed at her, pointing out that they had been in Azkaban for over a decade and were restrained using magic inhibiting manacles. There were four aurors wearing body armour and the boatman against three wasted death eaters, she had a really bad feeling about this and it would be no consolation if she were proven right.

The three had sat unmoving and they were an hour into the ninety minutes the crossing required when Rabastan started coughing before moving to the side of the small boat to throw up, Carrick and Jones were laughing but Connie's hand immediately starting reaching

for her wand. Unfortunately she was watching the wrong Lestrangle as Rudolphus pounced on her and the reason for only two death eaters to a boat was abundantly clear, in the small, tight confines of the boat she didn't have time to draw her wand. They were packed so tight and all struggling for their lives now she could have hit anyone with a spell fired.

Rudolphus was a dirty fighter but then Connie didn't know any other way to do battle having been trained by a master of the technique, in their struggles her thumb found the death eater's left eye and pushed right through it. His screams of pain were cut short by her elbow connecting violently with his jaw and he collapsed unconscious while Connie finally freed her wand.

Rabastan had felled Jones and was now overpowering Carrick when Connie clipped him with a stunner, she heard the splash before even having the time to turn around and no sooner did she complete the manoeuvre than she was left wishing she hadn't.

The forth member of the team was young John Phillips, a first year auror who was so excited to get his dragon hide vest especially since it was an open secret where the gold for the vests had come from. He now lay there with his life blood spilled all over his brand new vest which was no protection from a psycho bitch like Bellatrix, she had ripped out the poor lads throat with her teeth! A quick examination confirmed that he was dead and his wand as well as the keys to the manacles were missing, the bitch was not only free but also armed.

She stood and stunned the Lestrangle brothers again before punching Carrick, landing him on his arse. "What the hell are you playing at?" Connie demanded.

"I was going to summon the bitch, why did you stop me?"

Connie pointed to Phillips, "she did that without magic, she now has a wand and the key to those manacles you put so much faith in and Donald friggin Carrick wants to summon her into our boat! Why don't you summon a dozen sharks while you're at it, we would probably stand a better chance against them."

Donald was turning green as the enormity of his screw-up began to penetrate his befuddled mind, he'd lost a member of his team, Bellatrix Lestrangle had escaped with a wand and for the life of him he couldn't think of who else to blame for this fiasco.

Connie saw the boatman's head appear at the tiny window in the miniscule wheelhouse, "get us out of here as fast as you can." This was one order the boatman was more than happy to comply with as Connie checked on Jones, before stunning the brothers again just to make sure there would be no more surprises.

Connie knew what Amelia and Shack's reaction would be and Donald would count himself lucky if he didn't find his new accommodation was a cell, being charged with criminal negligence. This thought gave her no comfort, the sheet covered body of John Phillips put paid to that, she stunned both Lestrangle brothers once more wishing she had followed her instincts in the first place.

Bellatrix watched the tiny boat pick up speed and head away; she was stationary about twenty feet deep and wearing a bubblehead charm. She'd been remarkably calm whilst trying to remove those chains, perhaps it was the knowledge that Azkaban wasn't going to claim her as she'd gladly drown rather than return to that hellhole.

When she got the manacles off the bubblehead charm allowed her to stay below the boat, and with the application of a heating charm she was feeling better than she had in well over a decade.

As the boat disappeared her euphoria suddenly acquired an extra dimension, she could feel her master through her mark. The wards of the prison and those manacles had prevented her feeling him sooner, he was very weak but Bella could always sense her master's presence. Her husband and brother-in-law were quickly forgotten about as she imagined herself once more at the Dark Lord's feet; yes her master would need his most dedicated and loyal follower with Bellatrix Lestrangle vowing never to fail him again. She was going to be reunited with her master and woe betides anyone who got in her way.

Please review

A/N Thanks to Old-Crow for permission to use Connie Hamer.

Chapter 20

Everyone at the institute was up early that Saturday morning eagerly awaiting the arrival of the kids from the orphanage, they were all looking forward to spending some time with the children and Harry was delighted how well his present had been received by Hermione. She had flung herself into full 'help the children' mode and was delving through the adoption laws for anything that could be changed to help, one of the main problems was the whole 'blood' issue as sometimes babies were just left on the orphanage steps with no history available – Joan fell into this category which probably explained why the delightful little girl hadn't been adopted.

Harry smiled as he noticed his wife fingering her locket which had inter-twined HJP's engraved into the face and pictures of them both inside, he didn't need the back-up plan but couldn't help spoiling her every chance he got.

They had planned to take all the children shopping today and were waiting to see how that went before organising any more activities for the rest of the week, they were going to teach them swimming and flying with more being added as the holiday progressed.

When the children arrived it was pandemonium as their excitement had been building all week, two of the younger boys made a beeline straight for the pool and jumped in fully clothed. The fact that neither could swim had never even crossed their minds, water was for getting wet with and they certainly achieved that.

They eventually got them settled into rooms and the elves were working overtime trying to childproof the institute. To an adult a balcony is for sitting relaxing while you gaze out into the world around you, to a four year old it's an exotic climbing frame with treasure beyond measure on the other side so you just have to climb it.

The respect for Jillian Green and her team shot up and Harry knew they would need their expertise in designing the new orphanage at the former Malfoy Manor, out of everyone at the institute only Dan and Emma had any experience at dealing with young children.

The children sat mesmerised on the terrace and almost ignored the food on the table, not only could they see the beach and ocean but a cruise ship was sailing past to give its passengers a view of the famous cliffs. Some of the children were waving without understanding that the people on the boat couldn't see the Institute; it's wards kept them private.

Harry found Joan stuck to him like glue but unlike the Creeveys was not annoying him with inane questions every two seconds, she seemed quite content just to be near him and when he held his hand out to take hers as they walked her smile lit the entire room. Hermione had been working on sorting the children into groups who would be accompanied to Naples for some shopping and had smiled at her husband when Joan's name was at the top of their list. When Hermione took the girls other hand Joan just seemed to glow, both Potters didn't think the young girl had ever been as happy and they hadn't even done any shopping yet.

Everyone from the Institute was working in pairs and had about six children in their care as they headed out on a shopping trip that had little eyes sparkling with wonder, Dobby took Jillian and her staff to their new place of work so they could start informing the elves what needed to be done.

-oOoOo-

Connie sat in an interview room at the ministry having just finished writing her report on the incident, they had all been separated as soon as they reached shore and would stay that way until it could be established exactly what went wrong.

Amelia, Shack and his now ex-partner Tonks entered the room and took chairs opposite her as Amelia fingered the report on the table, "Ok Connie, forget this and tell us what really happened, Carrick is claiming he had the situation well in hand when you punched him out and allowed that bitch to escape."

Connie was sure getting practice at holding her temper, a few deep breaths later and she was at least calm enough not to shout. "Our Don' had a date and didn't want to waste the extra four hours it would

take for another round trip so allowed the three most dangerous death eaters onto the boat at the same time. I recommended we stun them for the entire journey and was laughed at; the death eaters bided their time and sprang their trap with ruthless efficiency. I managed to overpower Rudolphus, and then stunned Rabasten but by that time the bitch had done her work and made off over the side. I checked that Phillips was indeed dead with his wand and keys missing before turning round to see that prick Riddick about to cast a summoning charm so I decked him.”

“ Please assume we’re stupid and explain the reason behind punching him,” Amelia asked.

“We had a man dead, another down unconscious and a boatman who I could tell had shit himself even from where I was standing on the boat. Not only didn’t Riddick check if Jones was ok or could be revived to help us, he didn’t even tell me what the plan was. The brainless wonder couldn’t even handle a wand-less and handcuffed Rabasten with Jones for assistance, his intention of summoning a free and armed Bellatrix Lestrangle into the boat was just plain suicidal. We would have all been killed while she was saved the trouble of swimming to the shore.”

Shack shook his head; “you should have done us all a favour and threw the stupid bastard overboard to look for her, save us the trouble of a trial. There was me thinking that nobody could be as stupid as Cornelius Fudge and his nephew goes and proves me wrong.”

“I’m sorry boss I wish...”

“You have nothing to be sorry about, but for your actions we would have four dead aurors and all three Lestrangle’s on the loose, Merlin knows Bellatrix is bad enough on her own. Your new assignment is minister protection detail along with Tonks here, now I know normally I wouldn’t stand a chance in an argument with three women but this has to happen at least until this bitch is caught.”

Amelia was set to argue but could see her friend and new head of DMLE was right, later today she was going to sentence the other two

Lestranges to the veil and killing her husband and brother-in-law would put her right at the top of Bellatrix's murder list as if being minister wasn't enough. She had some phone calls to make then she couldn't put off dealing with that Weasley prat any longer, even if only to stop the old goat from bothering her secretary.

-oOoOo-

The kids were having the time of their lives, not only were they being welcomed into the shops but they had all been given gold to spend from Harry with strict instructions not to spend it on clothes as they would be bought for them. The magical shopping district was benefiting greatly from the Potters locating there and couldn't be more helpful, all shops had lines of credit set up for the Institute or Lord Potter's personal account. As this wasn't Institute business Harry was footing the bill for today and had even purchased half a dozen junior brooms to teach the younger ones to fly.

Both Potters couldn't help but notice that Joan never left their sides the entire trip, while the other children in the group would get excited about something in a shop window her highlights seemed to be holding their hands or receiving a hug. Harry recognised the signs from Hermione's childhood of a young girl desperate for some sort of affection, a kind word from one of the staff at the orphanage would probably have her smiling all day. The parallels between the two were reinforced when Joan dragged Hermione into a bookshop so she could spend the gold Harry gave her. He wasn't sure whether to laugh or cry for this young girl who was making such an impression on them.

Harry was drawn out of his musings by his mobile phone ringing and quickly answered when the caller ID indicated it was Amelia.

Two minutes later and he was calling for Dobbie, there didn't seem to be much sense in spoiling everyone's fun when they couldn't do anything about the situation. They were all heading back to the Institute for lunch in less than two hours and the news could be broken then.

-oOoOo-

Not for the first time Jillian Green thanked Merlin for sending the Potters to answer her prayers, the new orphanage building was beyond anything she could have imagined. The manor itself had been stripped from top to bottom and they now had a blank canvas to work with, even more incredible was the fact they had a budget for the refurbishment and such a willing workforce.

She had met with the Potters twice more before today and the probing questions Hermione had asked reassured Jillian that this was not a passing whim for them, they were the most serious and mature teenagers she had ever met. On both of their visits Joan just happened to run into them, she was one of Jillian's favourites but because of being left on the doorstep they had no way of determining her blood status therefore her chances of adoption were slim to none. At least now thanks to the Potters she was guaranteed an education and, being a very bright child, she should do well.

Jillian was startled by the sudden appearance of Dobby but his message startled her even more, "Miss Green, you and your staff must return to the Institute immediately. A wicked witch has escaped and may come to this house looking for her sister, mister Harry wants everyone, including elves out of this building very quickly."

It seemed pretty strange to be ordered around by a house elf but Dobby brokored no argument, less than ten minutes after Harry gave the order in Naples the former Malfoy Manor was totally empty.

-oOoOo-

Percy Weasley found himself led into a room that held the minister, four male aurors and Penelope, he had no idea what was going on but couldn't believe his ears when Madam Bones informed him what was about to happen.

"Mr Weasley you seem to think it's alright to demand young girls remove articles of clothing in public, I strongly disagree with that under any circumstances but even more so since one of them was my niece. Your fiancée here has argued that you meant no disrespect and it was their shirts you found offensive, she claims that you were

not trying to sexually harass the girls and that no harm would have been done. As proof of this she is going to take her top off here in front of these aurors.”

Percy was struggling with the thought that his incredibly shy Penelope was doing this for him, but as she slowly got to her third button reality paid a rare visit to Percy the prick and he was up out his seat and standing in front of his fiancée with his back to her blocking the view of the male aurors present.

“This has gone far enough, I know that I was incredibly stupid the other day and will accept any punishment handed out but this is not happening,” Percy turned to see the minister practically smiling at him.

‘Mr Weasley had my Auror undone one more button you would have felt the full weight of the law descend upon you,” Percy span round to see a pink haired woman re-buttoning her blouse. “As you seem to have come to your senses I’ve decided to give you another chance, whether I like it or not you now hold a position that demands a certain level of behaviour on your part. Should that level sink below an acceptable point again I will come after you, do not make me regret this decision Percy as two Weasleys in the cells already is really quit enough.”

Percy knew he was incredibly lucky to be given a second chance so with a ‘thank you’ he almost ran out the office desperate to find the nearest floo and get back to Penelope.

-oOoOo-

As the kids were sitting down to lunch at the Institute Harry arranged for a quick meeting with Jillian and her staff as well as Pomona, Minerva, Hermione, mum and dad.

“Bellatrix Lestrange has escaped and I am worried that she may head for the former Malfoy Manor looking for help from her sister. Why I have everyone here is to discuss our options and ask the following questions: can the orphanage staff stay here and will we

have room come September the first for our students and the orphanage should they still be here?"

Jillian glanced towards her staff and received nothing but nods, "some of my staff only work part time but would be delighted to spend a few days a week staying here."

Minerva and Pomona were deep in discussion regarding accommodation and quickly came to a decision, "we don't see a problem with numbers but think it would be a good idea to have a separate floor or wing adapted to their specific needs. We also think it would benefit everyone if we all ate our meals together and allowed the children to mix as much as possible with the students. Even with teaching two subjects our relatively low numbers for the moment means that staff have some spare time on their hands and both Minerva and I would like to volunteer to run some classes for them, I'm sure some of the other teachers will do the same."

Emma immediately spoke for her and Dan, "we're pretty sure we won't be returning to dentistry and I can't think of anything more worthwhile, we will help you all we can."

Jillian could only nod in thanks; her throat just wouldn't work as she struggled to fight back the tears. Here were people she'd only recently met rearranging their school and lives to freely offer of their time and expertise to help her orphans. This was not a typical experience for the lady who had ran the orphanage for the last eight years, she had never went to Hogwarts but had learned the business from the inside out.

Thirty-one years ago she had been left on the orphanage steps and, like Joan and so many others over the years, her undetermined blood status had meant she was left to grow up in the place she now worked. When the manager left she had been working as her unpaid assistant for six years and had got the job under the prefix that no one else wanted it.

She was paid a pittance of a salary and ploughed most of it straight back in to help keep the orphanage running, these people were showing her more kindness than she had ever received and asking

nothing in return. This was beyond her experience so she just had to nod and hope she was doing the right thing, life had taught her that when something sounded too good to be true it usually meant trouble but she couldn't see what the Potters had to gain by scamming an orphanage. Amelia was a frequent visitor to the orphanage and helped out when she could, the fact that she trusted these people went a long way to easing her fears.

What Jillian didn't know was that the Potters were well aware of not only her origins but the fact that she had been spending most of her money to ensure the children got at least fed. She would now be paid directly into her newly opened Gringotts account and the first time she visited it would be quite a shock, they had deposited back-money that amounted to her being paid a decent wage for the last eight years. A person who was prepared to give of herself in that manner was definitely the woman Harry and Hermione wanted running the orphanage.

They left the meeting to find Joan sitting on a chair beside the door engrossed with a book she had bought that morning, she came straight over and took Hermione's hand while asking her about something she'd read but not understood.

Dan and Emma watched with Harry as Hermione sat beside Joan with her arm around her shoulder, "she reminds me so much of Hermione," said Dan "I only wished that I'd put my arm around my daughter when she didn't understand something. It was right there in front of us all the time but neither of us saw it, it's not just about answering the question but also giving comfort with the gesture. That arm around Joan's shoulder is saying that it's ok not to know everything and always ask questions if you don't understand something. Our daughter and son are already better parents than we were."

"I hate to ruin your pity party dad but Hermione turned out just fine, you're just going to have to spoil your grandchildren."

This earned Harry a playful smack from Emma while he watched his wife answer his unasked question over their bond, 'yes love, this is what it's like to have family.'

-oOoOo-

Albus Dumbledore looked at the letters on his desk in total frustration, he'd sorted them under every heading he could think off but still couldn't see a pattern of what Potter was up to. All he was able to discern is that he hadn't taken any students older than his own year group, which thankfully left most of the seniors still at Hogwarts to compete. Only one figure was constant as he looked at the piles that loomed larger than the Himalayas to the old wizard, there were eighty letters of rejection in total, which was over a quarter of Hogwarts students.

Including Harry and his mudblood there were sixty-one students going to Potter, a dozen Slytherins had 'elsewhere' written on them with another two snakes going to Durmstrang and five Ravenclaws leaving for Beauxbatons. The number of students heading for Potter was by far the largest group and as it included all houses and all blood statuses he hadn't a clue what the brat was up to other than the fact that it couldn't be allowed to continue or Hogwarts wouldn't survive. Only the fact that he had four professors now on staff who had just left school, John Stewart in Herbology and Oliver Woods as DADA, filling his vacancies and being paid a lot less than the teachers they replaced would allow Hogwarts to continue this year.

He had wanted to call a meeting with the head's of house but that prat Percy getting arrested had put paid to that but now he was free they should be able to proceed early next week. He was not looking forward to telling Horace that Harry Potter was no longer a student at Hogwarts; the new head of Slytherin was almost salivating at the thought of adding the boy-who-lived to his slug club membership portfolio.

Fortunately he was Albus Dumbledore and had a foolproof plan for getting the brat back to Hogwarts and once again under his control. When he came to compete in the Tri-Wizard Albus would take the brat aside and show him the prophesy, once he realised that he had to face Voldemort the offer of special training under his illustrious self would be more than enough to entice the ungrateful brat back to the castle. He would be recorded as an assistant professor of DADA to

overcome his magical oath and it might settle Woods as Albus was having to use compulsion charms every other day, the boy must be fanatical about Quidittch to fight it so hard.

Unfortunately that would be the only assistant professorship open, due to reduced student numbers, and this would also separate him from his mudblood and friends leaving Ronald Weasley as his only other option.

Of course any training Albus gave would be old, archaic spells that took so long to cast they would allow Voldemort to kill him easily, leaving the great Dumbledore to come to the rescue of the wizarding world. Sometimes his brilliance dazzled even himself and when the dust had settled the wizarding world would see just who was taking the piss.

-oOoOo-

Peter Pettigrew was not a happy wizard, this was not a new phenomenon but the degree of unhappiness was gradually climbing to heights that hadn't been scaled in well over a decade. They had been travelling for ages before finally reaching their destination last night, his master was exhausted but was getting stronger every day and there lay his dilemma. The more Peter cared for his master the stronger he became but as his strength grew so did his temper and the body he inhabited was now able to use a wand.

The better care he took of his master then the more likely he was to be on the receiving end of his wand, Peter was not what you would call a smart wizard but even he could see the flaw in that logic - unfortunately he'd chosen his side and couldn't change now.

He'd been sent by his master to collect any information he could on the current situation in wizarding Britain which was why he was now strolling through the shadows of Hogsmead late at night.

“Can you please show your left arm?”

The question that was really a demand came from the shop doorway in front of Peter where a man who was missing his left sleeve now appeared, he also had a wand in his hand that was pointed directly at the death eater.

Peter was totally taken aback, what the hell was going on here?
“What seems to be the problem sir?”

“Oh no problem,” the man answered, “unless of course you have a dark mark on your arm.”

Peter noticed more people being drawn to the incident and every one of them had their left sleeve missing, his blood froze as realisation of what this meant sank into even his slow mind.

“Oh there won’t be a problem then,” he said as his right hand reached for his left sleeve. With everyone’s attention now on his arm, Peter spun round and dived for the narrow alley between the shops. No sooner was he out of sight than stunners were being fired in his direction. He changed into his rat form and crawled into a hole underneath the building where he stayed for over an hour, when the coast was clear Wormtail emerged and kept his form while rummaging through some refuse looking for newspapers.

What he found scared him more than Voldemort, and that was really saying something. George Grafton was on the front page of the old newspaper minus the back of his head with the banner headline screaming, “Potter dispenses justice!” It was all here, the new laws, punishments and the fact that Potter wasn’t living in Britain any more. Normally there would be a mad scramble to find some patsy that would present news like this to the Dark Lord but since there was only him available then he would just have to screw up his courage and face his master. A very scary thought passed through the mind of the death eater, supposing he was the only one left?

He might not have that worry if he didn’t get a move on, he was late and bringing bad news that not only destroyed death eaters but shattered his master’s plans as well, there was every chance the Dark Lord’s temper would see Peter killed tonight.

-oOoOo-

Night was falling on the beach at the Institute as the older children toasted marshmallows over bluebell flames in the sand. Jillian watched while the youngsters fought sleep before finally succumbing and then being whisked to bed by an elf, she shared a look with her staff that clearly said they could get used to this. She looked towards the Potters and couldn't help but smile, Jillian had seen this happen occasionally over the years where a couple and a child had just clicked. Watching them together she wasn't even sure if they were aware of it yet and she would need to talk to her friend Amelia on what was possible, though where the Potters were concerned she was learning that nothing could be ruled out.

Joan had fallen asleep with her head on Hermione's lap but she had shooed the elf away who was going to take the sleeping girl to bed, Harry couldn't take his eyes off his wife as she unconsciously ran her fingers through Joan's hair. Seeing the two of them together was a beautiful sight for the young wizard, although Hermione was more of age to be her big sister the relationship definitely leaned more towards mother / daughter, dad was right on the money when he said she would make a wonderful mum.

Today had ended once and for all any debate between the Potters about whether they were right to come back in time, watching the sheer joy on the children's faces just from the pleasure of being on the beach beside the sea was a patronus worthy memory. Harry, Hermione, Ginny, Neville and Luna all had great fun splashing and playing games with the kids, even taking them on broom rides over the sea. Joan was a bit reluctant at first but Hermione whispered in her ear, "nothing bad will ever happen to you while Harry's there." This gave her the confidence to climb on and she was soon enjoying herself as the five of them gently raced above the waves with their passenger's laughter ringing in their ears.

Harry was carrying the sleeping Joan back up to the Institute while wondering how this little girl had wormed her way into their affections so quickly, Harry had felt a connection that first day in the orphanage but it was just something that refused to be analysed. Perhaps it was

both of them being left on a doorstep as babies or the fact that she didn't make friends easily but something about this kid cried out to both himself and Hermione on an almost primeval level. Whatever it was there would be no ignoring it, as Joan already seemed part of their lives.

He glanced towards Neville who had Luna burying into his chest as they walked beside them, the news of Bellatrix's escape had hit the young wizard hard. They knew from the previous timeline who was responsible for what happened to his parents and the way Luna had been supportively clinging to him all day indicated he had shared the details with her. Having fun with the kids had been good for him today though Harry had immediately binned his proposal that they cut back on training while the children were here, with that bitch on the loose and armed they needed to be ready for anything.

-oOoOo-

Bella was beyond tired, she had been pushing herself to get inland and avoid any ministry search parties that were sure to be looking for her, but lack of food and sleep were beginning to take its toll and she needed a bolthole for the night. She could feel her master getting stronger and was drawn towards him like iron filings to a magnet but Bella was worn out. She chose the house at the end of the street and an alohomora gained her entry, it was a risk performing magic but that spell was so low powered she doubted if the ministry monitors could even detect it.

Making her way into the kitchen she discovered exactly what was required handily protruding from a block of wood, large sharp knives. She had to kill quietly while using no magic and these were just perfect for the job, the death eater stealthily made her way up the stairs of the darkened house. Bella found a couple lying sleeping in the first room and approached the bed with a knife in each hand, the husband's eyes shot open as she expertly slid the knife between his ribs and straight through his heart. The man was dead but his brain just hadn't registered that fact yet as she repeated the procedure on his still sleeping wife.

Having checked the rest of the house was empty she returned to the kitchen and ate everything she could lay her hands on, she would have liked to torture the couple before sending them on their way but didn't want anything to distract her from getting to her master. There would be plenty time for pleasure later but right now she needed to sleep, having eaten her fill she lay down in an empty bedroom and was soon fast asleep though with her wand still clutched in her hand.

The young man sneaked into the house as quietly as possible and ghosted up the stairs with a mad gleam in his eyes, he was in so much trouble but right at this moment he didn't care. He knew his dad would freak over him being out all night but any punishment would be worth it, no longer would he be the butt of all the jokes in school because he was now a man and nothing could wipe the smile off his face. Nothing that is except seeing his parents bedroom door open and both of them lying there with knife handles protruding from their unmoving chests, he took a deep breath before screaming "HELP!" at the top of his lungs while racing back down the stairs. On this night of firsts for the young man he had the dubious honour of being the first person hit by a killing curse from Bellatrix Lestrange in over a decade.

Since the aurors now knew where she was Bella was forced into apparating to the one place that came to mind where they couldn't follow, it was very risky but the sounds of apparition pops coming from outside left her with no option so she disappeared before they had time to get any wards up.

-oOoOo-

The group had almost finished training and Amber was progressing well with her shooting when an injured Dobby appeared and had Harry on his knees trying to asses the damage to his little friend. "Dobby will be fine, Mrs Black called for Dobby to tell him wicked witch is in Lord Black's house. Wicked witch caught Dobby with spell but I protected myself." His grin wasn't masking the fact that he was in pain.

"Winky!" Harry called and was instantly rewarded with the arrival of the elf in question, "get Dobby to Poppy and make sure he rests until he's better."

The determined expression on Winky's face left no doubt that his orders would be followed to the letter, Dobby was in good hands as she popped both elves away to find the healer.

Harry turned round to see everyone staring at him in anticipation, "well why do you think we've been training? Suited and booted people, we leave in five minutes."

He grabbed Neville as Hermione took Luna and they apparated to the corridor outside their rooms, "full armour and game faces, this is as real as it gets."

Neville hugged Harry while pounding his back before kissing Luna and diving into his room where the elves had his armour laid out waiting on him. Luna kissed Harry, "thank you, this means a lot to Neville," he just hugged his sister before dashing off with Hermione to get ready.

Back on the beach Sirius had pulled Amber into an embrace and kissed her so hard her toes curled, his 'see you soon' before grabbing Dan and following Remus with Emma as they apparated to the Institute left her sinking to her knees on the sand thinking he was in so much trouble when he got back. That thought led Amber to praying he did come back and released a whole other set of emotions in the young woman.

At opposite ends of the institute two girls had been watching the training session on the beach and could sense something wasn't right so both Ginny and Joan started racing towards Harry and Hermione's room to find out just what was happening.

Hermione left their bedroom to find herself being crushed in a hug by a crying eight-year-old, Joan had taken one look at her outfit and didn't need to be told any more.

"Joan it's alright, remember what I told you yesterday? 'Nothing bad will ever happen to you while Harry's there' well here he is and he won't let anything happen to me."

Harry had been on the phone to Amelia as he joined Hermione in trying to console the young girl, both were dressed for battle and Joan now had an arm round each of them.

Ginny glanced towards them wondering if they were going after Riddle but Harry's answer of Bellatrix did little to lessen her concerns, everyone said she was nearly as bad as her master. She took the still crying Joan in her arms as a similarly dressed Neville and Luna joined them and they all made their way to meet with the others.

Harry had Hermione and Neville either side of him with Luna directly behind, they had devised this diamond formation in the last timeline and were using it again. Across from them the others were using the exact same tactics with Remus in front, Dan and Emma beside him with Sirius guarding their backs. All eight had weapons drawn and were ready for anything.

They were portkeying in as two groups to cover each other, with a quick nod to Ginny and Joan they were off to face a wicked witch but didn't think a bucket of water was going to melt this one.

Please review and my thanks to those who have.

Chapter 21

Bella was picking herself up off the floor wondering what the hell had just happened, the dazed witch shook her head trying to clear the ringing from her ears after being slammed into a wall. She had heard her aunt's portrait speaking to the strangest house elf the pureblood witch had ever seen, when Bella had noticed the Potter coat of arms on his uniform she fired off a curse at the creature. The little bastard actually had the audacity to move out of the way and then fire a curse at her; Bella was so surprised she didn't even react hence coming round on the floor with a sore head. What was the world coming to when a house elf not only tried to dodge your curses but actually fought back, they were on her masters list for annihilation anyway but Bella would ask the Dark Lord if she could deal with that one personally.

Bella was going to have a chat with her aunt's portrait to find out what else had changed while she had been away when two groups did the impossible and portkeyed into the most noble and ancient house of Black. She adopted her usual tactic of a spread of three killing curses that would hopefully hit a few but at least scatter them, forcing her opponents to seek cover.

As soon as Luna had confirmed there was nobody behind them she shouted 'clear' and they went into full attack mode, as the green killing curses came rushing towards them she levitated furniture to block their path. Sirius was doing the same job for the other group allowing six people to rain down spells and bullets on their target, Bellatrix might be good but nobody could stand up to that barrage.

The female death eater didn't have time to register her astonishment at the tactics being deployed as Bella was too busy trying to stay alive, she dived onto the floor and her momentum slid her along the recently polished surface until she hit the double doors of the dining room. Jumping up Bella frantically attempted to apparate but discovered to her dismay preventative wards were already in place so was left with no choice but to enter the dining room as the doors were destroyed just as she got clear. Bella felt something tear into her left elbow with such force that it spun her round, this was probably not a

bad thing for the death eater as two reductor curses whizzed by where her head and chest would have been the second before.

The pain being emitted from her now useless arm was excruciating but Bella had quickly come to realise that if she didn't get out of here she wouldn't feel pain ever again, these were not ministry aurors out to capture her using nothing stronger than a stunner – these people wanted her dead and had the skills to achieve their goal.

The death eater had been in enough fights to recognise this battle was only going to end one way unless she got out of there in the next few seconds.

Amelia had grabbed everyone available to her upon receiving Harry's call, he told her they were working on a timescale measured in minutes so the minister had to trust they knew what they were doing. Tonks, having been brought back into the Black family by Sirius, was able to see the house but not enter it until invited by him. The metamorphous was in charge of setting up the perimeter and anti-apparition wards, Sirius would create the portkeys that would take their group inside the house and Amelia's task was ensuring the bitch didn't get away.

This proved easier said than done as glass suddenly appeared out of nowhere and forced her team to take cover, the flying glass was closely followed by a truly terrifying sight. Bellatrix Lestrange was considered the wrong side of crazy on a good day, this was probably not one of her better days as she swooped down amongst them loosing blood from the side of her head while her left arm looked to be hanging off at the elbow. She was sending off killing curses in all directions and the aurors were left scrambling for cover as she raced right through them until reaching the edge of the wards, she apparated with only one thought in her mind as her left forearm dropped onto the pavement.

Bellatrix Lestrange had escaped for now but nobody would be asking her to lift up her left sleeve as it would be empty, they weren't quite sure if she'd splinched herself or if there just wasn't enough tissue left holding the arm on during apparition.

-oOoOo-

The creature that was Voldemort was in a terrible mood and his dilemma was the polar opposite of Peter's, the more he cursed the useless servant the longer he would have to wait on Wormtail being able to take care of him again. Thus he had limited his administration of the cruciatus to the bare minimum his temper would allow though Peter still ended up unconscious. His screams had even attracted the attention of the old muggle caretaker and he had to be dealt with, fortunately Nagini was available to dispose of the foolish old man.

Peter had muttered something last night about having a plan but he was too enraged even to listen, oh how he wished for a better servant than Wormtail.

Magic can do amazing things, sometimes it almost seems sentient because at the exact same instant an agony riddled Bella apparated but without a destination in mind. All that her pain-muddled brain would process was 'must find master' so magic took a hand, granting both of them their wish and the death eater appeared before her lord once more. She managed to mutter 'master' before collapsing at the creature's feet.

-oOoOo-

Amber had joined Ginny and Joan as they waited for news, Pomona was trying to be angry at Remus for not telling her he was going but was much more worried about her wizard not coming back that she wasn't able to sustain it.

When they heard the ringing sound Amber was up like a shot and sped to the nearby room containing the telephone, she answered it and sank to her knees before realising that they were all looking at her with grim expressions. "It's Harry, everyone's ok with nothing more than a few cuts and bruises."

Joan buried her face into Ginny and cried her little heart out in relief until Amber tapped the girl on her shoulder, "it's Hermione, and she wants to speak to you."

She took the device with trembling hands and heard the instantly recognisable voice coming from it, “ hey Joan we’re fine, I told you nothing bad will ever happen to me while Harry’s there. He could hear you crying all the way to London and didn’t want you to worry; we have to talk to some people here and might be a while. You enjoy yourself and we’ll be home to see you soon.”

Everyone could see the instant change in the little girl’s demeanour, she still had tears running down her cheeks but her face was now the proud owner of one of the widest smiles available, Joan whispered “love you” not realising that the device in her hands would send those words straight to Hermione and require Harry to catch his wife as her knees buckled beneath her.

Joan handed the device back to Amber and almost skipped out the room with no concept that a thousand miles away a bushy haired, brown eyed witch was clinging to her husband crying tears of joy. The post battle adrenalin rush may have amplified the effects those words had on her but she wasn’t sure, what she was sure of was that both she and Harry were growing very attached to a young witch named Joan.

-oOoOo-

They were in the kitchen of Grimmauld when Harry summoned Winky, she immediately made them all tea and informed Harry that Dobby had a fractured shoulder which Poppy had healed, he was to take it easy for the rest of the day but should be fine by tomorrow.

Sirius had spoke to his mother’s portrait and she had suggested that Bella and Cissi be cast from the family then this couldn’t happen again, a couple of spells on the tapestry and this was accomplished. He took the family pensive into the kitchen so they could review this morning’s event and save Amelia asking lots of questions. There was already elves repairing the damage they had caused and even the doors had been put back together.

They had all been told the grim news that Bellatrix had wiped out some random muggle family for a bite to eat and a few hours sleep

which just made them angrier that they hadn't finished her earlier when they had the chance.

Shack, Amelia and her protection detail watched along with the eight as they made their superior numbers count and the minister couldn't help but compare this with their poor performance outside. They watched as a piece of debris cut Neville's cheek and another slammed into Emma's chest, Dan's bullet almost separating the death eater's arm while a reductor from Neville almost separated her head from her shoulders but instead took her ear off. She had caught them out when she had run towards the large window and blasted it with a spell just before reaching it, Bellatrix had jumped through the hole and raced away from the house.

When it was over Shack and Amelia were very impressed with their tactics but it was left to Connie to pour cold water on them.

"Those tactics wouldn't work for the auror division for the simple fact that I can't think of anyone I trust enough for me to stand against a killing curse and hope they blocked it. They stood there and never doubted that the other members of the team would do their jobs and protect them, I've never seen anything like it and am so glad they're on our side."

Hermione just smiled at the auror, "the difference is we're all family and couldn't let each other down if we tried, we trust the other members of the team with our lives because we have to. We're the ones who are going to end this war because we're the only ones who can, and that information ladies and gentlemen is classified. This is not our idea of some recreational fun and we left some very worried people behind including an eight-year-old who was breaking her heart, once Voldemort is dead these suits will be hung up for good."

Shack looked to Amelia who nodded confirmation that Hermione spoke the truth while his brain started putting the facts together, "this would explain our orders not to engage Voldemort in a fight, and can I assume that the snake is similar to that tiara?" A knowing smile from Harry and Shack connected the final few dots to form a picture he wasn't sure was to his liking, "does this mean the Prophet actually got something right for a change, you are the chosen one?"

It was actually Luna who answered the head of the DMLE with such venom in her voice that her friends got worried, "he might be the chosen one but that doesn't mean he's going to face that bastard alone, we'll be with him every step of the way and right by his side when he ends this once and for all."

Neville pulled her into a hug; the pensive had been hard to watch for Luna because this was no longer training. If she missed a block then it wasn't house points lost or a detention, a member of her family was going to be injured or worse. During the fight she had been just carrying out what she had learned but now sitting down and watching her actions left the young blond witch terrified.

Harry tried to reassure her, "Luna we know you had the worst job today but you are by far the best at defending the group and there's no one I trust more to keep us safe, you were absolutely brilliant today and I'm so proud of you but I'll let Neville administer the kiss I want to give you Sis."

One Neville administered kiss later and Luna was almost back on an even keel, they would talk about it later but she appeared over the worse of it for now.

Amelia was deep in thought for a moment before asking, "Harry, could you and your group fight some aurors as a demonstration? It was clear today that our current tactics are going to have to be reviewed and I think the sight of four 'children' whipping the arses of some over confident aurors would go a long way to highlighting their deficiencies."

"We currently practice three to one odds but I don't know if we want to give that advantage to aurors, lets say ten with nothing stronger than stunners as we wouldn't want to hurt anyone."

The cheeky way Harry said it had the auror's backs up but Shack had just watched a display that none of his department could match, individual match-ups he was confident his aurors would do well but their teamwork was devastating. "I would be really interested to see your training methods, would it be possible to observe a session?"

“As long as you don’t mind getting up early and don’t inform the aurors we’ll be facing about it,” Harry answered, “will you be alright for tomorrow mum?”

Emma couldn’t help but smile every time Harry used that word, “should be, bit sore at the moment and expect to be bruised but Poppy should have me fixed up in no time.” She then turned to Remus, “could I get a heavier weapon? I felt most of my shots were being deflected by all the debris that was flying around while Dan’s seemed able to punch through it.”

A wolfish grin appeared on his face, “how about a pump action shotgun with some charms on it to make it recoilless?”

A shudder passed through Dan, Hermione and Harry at the thought of what that weapon could do in Emma’s hands but she just gave a dainty smile and replied, “that will do nicely.”

“Remus Lupin you have totally corrupted my mother!” Hermione’s remark was said in jest and they all had a chuckle at Emma’s obvious joy at getting a bigger gun.

-oOoOo-

They arrived back at the Institute to much hugging by Ginny while the two Sprout ladies dragged both Marauders off for Merlin knows what. Joan had heard the commotion and came hurtling round the corner and launched herself at both Potters, clinging on and taking assurance from the fact they were back in one piece. The two injured were taken to see Poppy by their partners while Harry and Hermione sat on a sofa with Joan in between them.

Hermione kissed Joan’s forehead, “told you we’d be fine.”

“I was so worried” she answered, “why do you have to fight, can’t someone else do it? Harry’s already fought the bad wizard, isn’t it someone else’s turn?”

With her eight year old logic Joan had got right to the crux of the matter and Harry wasn't about to brush this bright girl off with some glib excuse. He had his arm around her shoulder and then took one of her little hands and brought it up to his scar, "when I was a baby the bad wizard killed my mum and dad before trying to kill me, it didn't work and he left me this. He's tried twice more since then and will keep on trying to hurt me and my family, which is why we're here in a place that's hard to find. He will never stop coming after me, my wife, mum and dad Granger and any children we have, which is why we must fight him so that we can live our lives without fear. We intend to beat him so we can live happily ever after."

"Not all fairy tales end that way," replied the bright little witch.

"No and I promised myself I wouldn't lie to you, we are doing everything in our power to make sure we get the ending we want."

Joan buried her head in his chest but Harry still heard the whispered "I want it to." It was time to speak to Jillian Green.

-oOoOo-

Jillian had been half expecting a visit from the Potters so wasn't to surprised when they asked to speak to her, their opening comments did however catch her off guard.

"We are having our marriage blessed in a few days, it was originally going to be our wedding but since we're soul bound that's no longer necessary. The ceremony and party will take place here and everyone from the orphanage is invited. We plan on taking a three week holiday straight after it and that is where the problem might be, we would like to take Joan with us and are speaking to you first to ask if this is possible." Hermione found she was nervous waiting on an answer.

Jillian was not drawing out the silence deliberately but trying to figure out the best way to handle this, these people were effectively her bosses. Eventually she had only one option as the welfare and happiness of Joan was her only priority here. "Can I ask why? Please

forgive my question but I have to know your intentions towards the child, I see her getting closer to you every day and to take Joan on a three week holiday then hand her back to me would be cruel beyond measure.”

Harry and Hermione smiling at her was not the reaction she expected until he spoke, “you have just confirmed our faith in you as the best person for the job, let’s see if we can put your mind at rest. We are both extremely fond of Joan and that fondness is growing by the hour but this is not a decision we wish to rush, as the thought of hurting her doesn’t bare thinking about. Hermione and I are pretty sure that we want Joan to be part of our family and feel that three weeks together would turn that into being certain. Assuming Joan would accept us as parents we would start proceedings as soon as we return to formally adopt her.”

This was what Jillian had been hoping to hear and she couldn’t keep the grin of her face, “well normally I would say you were too young to take on that many responsibilities but having watched you both closely I can’t think of two people I would rather see Joan go to. Shall we send for her?”

Winky appeared with a bemused Joan who immediately went to sit with Hermione as Harry spoke to the young witch, “there’s a delay with the new building so everyone’s going to be staying here for a lot longer than we thought and will be at our marriage blessing on Saturday.” It was plain to see that Joan thought this was great news.

“After the blessing Hermione and I, with mum an dad will be going away for three weeks and we’d like you to come with us.” Harry saw her expression change to one of uncertainty and understood the reason why, “Joan we’re very much alike you and I, I was also left on a doorstep and wondered what I had done wrong to deserve it. Going to sleep every night hoping that tomorrow would be the day when I would wake up and find it had all been a mistake, this is your tomorrow Joan. We want you to be our daughter and for you to use these three weeks to see if that’s what you want. Don’t feel you have to be a perfect little angel or the deal’s off, we’ve already made up our minds and this is to see if you can put up with us as parents.”

Joan had tears running down her cheeks for the third time that day but had never been happier.

“I have to warn you Joan that Hermione is very crabbit in the morning,” this earned him a playful hit from his wife, “and she also hits her poor defenceless husband for no reason.” This had all three girls laughing though Harry wasn’t sure whether it was the poor or defenceless jibe that caused it. “Are you sure you want her for your mother?”

Joan nodded emphatically before both girls became entangled in a mutual hug involving lots of tears, Harry watched before turning to a Jillian Green who had tears unashamedly running down her cheeks, “I don’t think we need to wait those three weeks, do you?”

She just smiled at him, “I never thought you did in the first place, I’ll get the paperwork started today and I can’t see the ministry giving you any hassle over it. Not when you’ve got the ministers mobile number in your phone.”

-oOoOo-

Voldemort managed to revive Wormtail and got him to seal Bella’s wounds then force some blood-replenishing potion down her throat, they had burgled an apothecary on the continent to maintain a supply of unicorn blood needed to keep him alive but they had also grabbed a variety of potions as well.

When Bella regained consciousness and Voldemort discovered all his loyal death eaters were not only being hunted down but also taken from Azkaban and killed as well, only the fact that he was so weak saved the two servants. It was with great trepidation that Peter administered his master’s potion but Voldemort wanted revenge on those who’d wronged him and Potter was top of the list.

“Wormtail, tell me this plan of yours?”

Peter now wished he’d kept his mouth shut as his master administered the torture curse until he was unconscious anyway, now

he was literally putting his head on the chopping block with no measurable gain for him. If the plan worked his master would take the credit, if it failed he would pay the ultimate price and even with the telling he risked his master's wrath.

"Master, the Potter brat is out of our reach for the moment but it's still vital that you get a new body, I may have a way to accomplish that and deal the brat a devastating blow." The fact that he wasn't cursed yet encouraged Peter to continue, "when I was keeping an eye on the brat in his dorm over the years one thing was constant, the boy who's pet I pretended to be was always there to save Potter's arse. He killed the troll you released in the castle and only his sacrifice allowed Potter to face you with the stone, he was in the chamber of secrets but the resulting rockslide when he defeated the formidable Gilderoy Lockhart prevented him accompanying Potter further. He even faced up to Black and the werewolf and is the Potter boy's closest friend and truest ally. If you choose pureblood Ron Weasley for the renewal ceremony you will be removing a foe whose been a thorn in your side with the additional benefit of crushing Potter with the loss of the person he thinks of as a brother."

Peter had heard all these stories directly from Ron as he talked to his pet and wasn't overly concerned if the boy had embellished his role in proceedings slightly; he was a lot more concerned at the moment with saving his arse.

Voldemort thought over the plan and had seen how close both boys were in his time as Quirrell, this plan might actually have some merit and he wouldn't have to wait so long to regain his body either. "Are you sure he wouldn't have left Hogwarts with Potter?"

"The Weasleys are a poor family but proud purebloods, they would never take gold they hadn't earned honestly. He'll be at Hogwarts."

"You just staked your life on it Wormtail, in September you will sneak into the castle to make certain that he's there then we can make preparations to snatch him right from under the old fools crooked nose. While everyone else is waiting on the champions being

chosen we will perform the ceremony on the night of Halloween, sending Potter his friend back piece by piece.”

Bella was at first unsure if this was in fact her master but hearing his cruel genius banished all her doubts, she was home once more.

-oOoOo-

The eight plus one marched into the ministry resplendent in their Institute robes, they'd actually been stopped in the Alley and asked to lift their sleeves where upon a laughing Harry had to ask the gentlemen if he would accept his word as their armour came down to their wrists and there wasn't a force on this earth strong enough to make Emma, Hermione and Luna take their tops off in public. When Harry was recognised they nearly fell over themselves trying to apologise though the group did notice they were the only ones sporting two sleeves to their robes.

The plus one was of course Joan who proudly wore her robes with the Potter family crest feeling like she finally belonged, Harry had spoken to her about the danger they might face in public so she knew exactly what to do. Get to the centre of their formation and make herself as small as possible, though considering she felt ten feet tall walking down the street holding her mum and gran by the hand that might be difficult.

They entered the ministry building and Tonks was waiting on them as they were ushered through security and straight to the auror training area, it had a large empty duelling arena in the centre with viewing positions all around it and had Harry shaking his head.

“Amelia you seen our pensive memory of Bella's fight and visited the Institute to watch us go through our paces, is this really how you train aurors?”

She actually looked embarrassed, “Fudge would only allow us duelling practice and any sort of combat training was forbidden, we wanted to wait until after your demonstration to reinforce the need for change.”

“Sorry Amelia, Joan you stay with gran and granddad while we go and give a demonstration.”

Emma pretended to be angry at Harry’s use of the word ‘gran’ but both she and Dan were delighted with the outcome, they knew their children were desperate for a family and hoped this might see Hermione waiting till she was at least eighteen in this timeline before having a baby. In the meantime they got a delightful granddaughter to spoil and who could fail to fall in love with Joan.

The four removed their robes leaving them in black tight fitting clothes over their body armour, the time Remus spent as a bodyguard had also taught him knives and each of them had a blade of some description concealed on their person.

They walked into the middle of the arena and went into their diamond formation but with Neville and Harry swapping positions, they were pretty sure that the aurors were just going to stand there and try to overload their shields with a constant barrage of stunners. Their counter was for the Potters to provide shields for the group while Neville and Luna picked the aurors off, if things got hairy Luna would assist with shields as Neville reduced the pressure by knocking down their opponents.

The quartet could see the looks of disdain coming from the aurors as they surrounded the kids, they felt insulted that they were being forced to participate in this farce of a publicity stunt and intended to end it quickly.

They got their wish but not in the manner they thought, when Amelia said ‘go’ both Potters had shields up that reflected back everything that was cast at them, in the end Neville and Luna only had to stun three of the aurors and the whole thing from start to finish took six seconds.

The watching audience of aurors and ministry officials were shocked into silence, as the teens started reviving the downed aurors one of them didn’t take it too well. He sprang up and knocked a surprised Luna onto her back before striding towards the arena exit, he didn’t

get to take two steps before an enraged Neville Longbottom was all over him.

Donald Carrick knew he was in deep shit and couldn't see a way out of it, he'd tried to blame the entire Lestrangle fiasco on that bitch Hammer but the fact that he was now stuck behind a desk while she was on ministerial protection duty told everyone what the outcome of the upcoming enquiry was going to be. When he got the offer of participating in the demonstration against Potter and his school friends he grabbed the chance like a drowning man, here was his opportunity to shine.

He had just managed to dodge his own curse that was reflected back off their shields when the little blond bint hit him with a stunner, the same blond bint reviving him proved just too much for his ego and he shoved her out the way as soon as he stood up. The disgruntled auror had only taken a step when he found himself face to face with an enraged Neville Longbottom; Donald took a swing at this kid as well before finding himself in a world of pain.

Donald Carrick fancied himself as a muscular young man but his muscles were purely for impressing the ladies, Luna may appreciate Neville's but they were primarily for situations like this. He easily dodged the auror's attempt at a punch and landed two solid ones of his own, the prick then made another feeble attempt, which he effortlessly blocked and followed up with another few strikes. He could see the man teetering so decided to finish him off using Hermione's signature move with an adaptation of his own, he smashed the auror's kneecap and spun quickly round connecting his elbow with the prick's now broken jaw resulting in him crumpling to the floor unconscious.

Neville turned to see the rest of the team had his back and a quick glance upwards showed the other team forming up with Joan casually moving into the centre, for a few seconds the whole situation had the potential to go pear shaped as every auror in the place was embarrassed at how easily they had been defeated.

Connie caught the movement out of the corner of her eye as the other team formed up and knew all it would take would be one spell

to start a fight that would be hard to stop, she deliberately moved her hands away from her wand while at the same time stepped over to cover Amelia's back. She was delighted that Tonks had caught on so quickly and mirrored her actions to protect Shack; Connie had seen these people fight against animated dummies and their mannequins had put up a far better fight than the static dummies that called themselves aurors.

Harry broke the tension, "do we really want to do this? We were invited here to show tactics that may help save lives only to find an auror knocking a thirteen-year-old witch to the ground because his ego was dented, well witches and wizards her fourteen-year-old boyfriend just dented more than his ego. Either Mr Longbottom or myself have the right to challenge this prick to a duel for his actions against Miss Lovegood but we are content to consider the matter dealt with if you are. If not then let's have at it because we've got business to see to elsewhere this afternoon." The power was now radiating off both Potters with blades being drawn by all four members of the team, the noise of Emma pumping a round into her shotgun sounded like thunder and kicked Amelia out of her stupor – she had expected the aurors to lose but the manner in which they did shocked her to the core.

"Aurors stand down!" Amelia shouted.

"You can't give that order minister, only the head of the DMLE can," a scarred old wizard shouted.

Shack shrugged his shoulders; "we intended to weed out the hangers on by departmental evaluations, if you wish to attack Lord Potter and his party it will save us the time and paperwork. These people, including the two muggles behind me with weapons drawn, faced up to Bellatrix Lestrange and her killing curses while aurors cowered behind any cover they could find. We've just seen them in action and I've watched them training and these eight would make mincemeat out of the whole auror department. We have grown complacent, fat and lazy which cost an auror his life last week, and for what reason? What did we achieve in the last war except to free death eaters with enough gold to bribe the right officials. What you see before you is

the future of magical law enforcement in this country, we will be adapting most of their training methods to suit our needs and entry to the program will be based purely on ability. The days of family influence in my department are over and anyone who doesn't like it can hand in their badge and robes now."

Kingsley's deep voice was booming off the walls by the time he was finished, the line had been drawn and aurors now knew what was expected of them though four would resign before they were pushed. That option was not available to Carrick, Amelia wanted him tried in court and Shack was only too happy to comply.

He had known that, thanks to continual budget cuts and being forced to except people who barely knew one end of a wand from the other, the department was in poor condition. The two Lestrage incidents and today highlighted just how far they'd sunk. Thanks to Lord Potter's generosity and with Amelia's backing he now had the funds and political will to rebuild the department into one that could kick some ass instead of getting it whipped by some teenagers.

With the crisis over Emma placed the tip of her shotgun into its holster and marvelled again at how it shrunk to fit before becoming invisible, she then took her new granddaughter by the hand and headed down to meet the kids.

"Uncle Neville that was so cool the way you hit that man who hurt aunty Luna," Joan loved the idea of having family so much that she was 'adopting' everyone into it with aunt Ginny and the marauding uncles added for good measure. She wasn't sure what status the Sprout ladies had in her new family but was looking forward to calling them aunty as well.

Joan hadn't just been adopted into the Potter family as everyone else seemed to have adopted the little girl as well, "your aunt Luna could have beat him up but she'd just had her nails done and didn't want to break one on his hard head." Neville loved to hear her calling him uncle as, like the other three he'd led a lonely life up till now and adored his extended family.

Amelia cleared her throat to get their attention, "Lord Potter I have some people here you agreed to meet."

Harry was racking his brain with even Hermione puzzled until they saw the man with a little girl, clutching a poster.

"Hello lord Potter, I believe the deal was that I provide you with a memory copy of your relatives arrest and you would sign my daughters poster."

Harry immediately knelt down to speak to the girl and sign her poster, Joan watched the scene with a hint of jealousy until she felt her mothers arms go around her from behind and then she bent down and kissed her cheek.

"He's your father now honey but look how happy he's made that little girl just by talking to her and signing a poster, this is just something we Potter girls are going to have to get used to but never forget it's us he loves. If any women or girls step over the boundaries though you have my permission to kick them in the ankles."

Joan was giggling but her dad was roaring with laughter from reading a piece of paper.

He rejoined the group still laughing, "it seems that when the charms wore off reverting the Dursleys back to human both were still in the quarantine cages, the muggle authorities think they're some kind of animal rights group and had managed to lock themselves in while freeing the walrus and ostrich. Vernon keeps screaming that it's the freaks doing this so they're sending him for psychiatric tests before charging them."

"Well this is my wedding present to you love, Dobby got Ragnok to track it down for me but it's yours to do with as you wish," Hermione handed Harry a legal document that had him confused at first until he realised what he held in his hands.

“I thought we could go today love and take the whole family to visit,” Harry grabbed his wife before twirling Hermione around and soundly snogging her.

“Could someone please tell me what my daughter just volunteered us for?” Dan asked.

“Your brilliant daughter is just taking the new family motto to a different level, ‘don’t get mad, get even’ but I only hope she’s never mad at me.”

-oOoOo-

Dudley Dursley’s life was going down the toilet, literally. He had spent his entire summer so far cleaning out his aunt’s dog kennels, who knew the little bastards could shit so much. He was forced to do the work while his aunt sat getting slowly pissed on sherry and bemoaning her lot since mum and dad got arrested, before that her excuse was they were both missing.

He’d been working like the freak all summer and missed his telly, playstation, snacks and gang but if he didn’t work he didn’t get fed. Dudley at first thought his aunt Marge was joking, and then he was sure he could outlast her but when the dogfood started looking appetising big D knew it was time to pick up the brush and shovel.

She would inspect the kennels in the morning and how well he was fed depended on the results though as the sherry consumption was getting progressively worse they’d had to settle for take-away the last couple of nights.

Dudley was wearing an old pair of torn dungarees while leaning on his brush as he paused to wipe the sweat of his face when all his attention switched to the Rolls Royce that had just turned into the drive heading towards the house.

He made his way over and his tongue was actually hanging out at the sight of the girl who the chauffeur was helping from the car, she was

so beautiful that he didn't notice the person that came out next until he spoke.

"Hello Dudley, love your new look. It really brings out the colour in your eyes, actually mate you look like shit!"

Dudley was now wondering if it was such a good idea to drink the remains of the sherry left when his aunt Marge eventually passed out because what his eyes were telling him just couldn't be true. The young man was dressed in clothes better than anything his father had ever owned and standing with his arm around the goddess that had exited the Rolls first. A young girl and an older couple joined them, though the woman was definitely still hot.

"Harry?"

"Got it in one Dud, just brought my family along to meet you. This is my wife Hermione, our daughter Joan, mum and dad Granger and not forgetting our chauffer Remus."

Dudley wasn't sure if it was the sun, sherry or the smell of all the shit but something was definitely off here, he didn't get time to say any more as aunt Marge and Ripper came out the house.

Ripper didn't know anything about fancy clothes or cars, he just sensed the boy he'd been trained to attack so he did, unfortunately for the misguided animal a certain big black dog was waiting in anticipation of this very event.

Padfoot leapt from the car and had Ripper by the scruff of the neck before the poor mutt even knew what was happening, the large dog then vigorously shook the now squealing bulldog before tossing the animal to land heavily at the large woman's feet.

"That vicious dog will be destroyed, attacking my poor, gentle Ripper in his own garden no less. I shall be contacting the authorities at once." Marge was bristling with so much indignation that she never even noticed who was standing there, it wasn't until the vicious dog

walked over to the group and was hugged by a little girl, Joan so loved her uncle Padfoot, that she recognised Harry.

“Boy!” she screamed, “what are you doing here? Get off my property now.”

“Actually Marge that’s what I came to see you about, if you would be so kind Remus.”

“Right away lord Potter,” the marauder walked forward in his chauffeur uniform and only his years of pulling pranks allowed him to keep a straight face, he handed the woman who made Molly Weasley look thin a bunch of very official looking documents.

“You see Marge my wonderful wife bought me this land as a wedding present, your current lease stipulates I am required to give you one months notice of eviction and that is what you now hold in your hands. On the first of September the bulldozers will be here to eradicate any trace of these buildings, as someone who actively encouraged her dog to bite a little boy you will receive no sympathy from me or my family.”

This colossus of a woman who had been Harry’s most malicious maligner and venomous chastiser crumpled to the ground and wept into the notices she had been given.

Harry felt no elation, took no pleasure at her predicament rather his feelings were more that justice had been served and he could now put his past behind him. He would carry the physical scars for the rest of his life but the mental ones were being healed with lots of love from those around him.

Dudley was now in awe of his cousin, he’d always been taught to respect those who were ‘better off’ than the Dursleys and to sneer down at those below. Harry was now obviously of the other category but Dudley was now unsure of his own place in the world.

“Harry, what’s going to happen to me?”

Harry considered this for a moment before answering, "I would have much preferred an orphanage to Privet Drive but I wasn't given a choice. You've been heading down a bad road Dud but the choice is yours, clean up your act or the Dursleys will be starting a new trend of family units in prison. I don't intend ever to meet you or your family ever again, I'm very happy to have a family of my own now."

Dudley watched as the gorgeous girl, her hot mother and the little girl all hugged and kissed his cousin before they climbed into the Rolls and drove out of his life forever.

Please review.

Chapter 22

Harry sat at his 'birthday breakfast' and thought this was easily the best birthday he'd ever had, celebrations were very informal with the marriage blessing arranged for this afternoon containing quite enough formality for everyone involved.

His presents were mostly in the form of novelty gifts though pride of place went to a beautiful hand made chess set where he and Hermione were the King and Queen, Luna and Neville the bishops, who else but Sirius and Remus as the Hippogriff riding knights with mum and dad as the rooks. The white pawns were uniformed Dobby's with the addition of a WWII GI helmet and machine gun but the poor blacks had to settle for a row of Cornelius Fudges as their first line of defence. The black's had Dumbledore as King, Voldemort as his 'Queen' Lucius Malfoy and Snape were the bishops, Vernon and Marge Dursley were the ostrich riding knights while the rooks were represented by a couple of dementors.

Mum and dad had crafted the pieces while Remus and Sirius handled all the charm work, as a gift it was beautiful, thoughtful and priceless but as a chess set it was a dead loss.

This was for two reasons; the battle animations between the pieces had everyone in stitches of laughter – watching Snape's arms fall off while Dumbledore rushed to pick them up for his friend had Harry struggling for breath he was laughing so much. Malfoy would sneer at the opposing piece then wet himself and walk off embarrassed while the Dursleys caused their ostrich legs to buckle under the weigh of their obese passengers and had to be carried off the board by the cursing siblings. Dumbledore would offer a lemon drop while using his other hand to try and sneak curses in while Voldemort seemed to have been based on every bad drag queen cliché imaginable, right down to his snake – a feather boa. Cornelius tried to bullshit every piece he came up against whereas Dobby was deadly with his machine gun, Emma's piece was equipped with her pump action but her aim seemed off with every shot catching the black character in the groin.

The main reason it was useless as a serious chess set is that the whole thing was charmed so black could never win, if Luna was in trouble Neville would appear and rip the black piece in two while none could get within three squares of Hermione.

Harry was touched by the thought and skill that had went into the creation of the gift but it was the idea behind it that he treasured most; the dark side couldn't harm any of them.

Hermione's present had confused him, it was apparently the latest product in the illegal Harry Potter gift range, an 'I've slept with Harry Potter' t-shirt. All became clear when he saw his wife's apparel, she had the same colour t-shirt with 'so have I' emblazed across it's chest while the back bore the legend 'there can be only ONE'.

Dad was howling with laughter when he saw it as this was supposedly from his favourite movie though Harry wasn't sure how 'Dirty Harry' featured in it. His mug from Joan bearing the message 'Worlds Best Dad' almost had him in tears, as did receiving cards from every orphan old enough to hold a crayon.

He and Hermione had spoken quietly to Gillian about their concern that some of the children might be jealous over their adoption of Joan, she was able to dispel most of their worries with the fact that all of the children were now staying here and their futures had never been so bright thanks to them. She was quite sure some of the children wished it was he or she that had been adopted but they were mostly used to the process by now and their quality of life had improved beyond recognition, Jillian joked that things were now so good ordinary kids would be starting to disown their parents to become orphans and be placed here.

Neville watched his best friend baulk at all the attention and had a smile on his lips from knowing exactly how he felt; his birthday dinner last night had put him in the spotlight. Neville's smile had been a permanent fixture since that dinner when he had diverted the attention away from himself towards the beautiful angel by his side. Luna had stayed with him the night they discovered Bellatrix had escaped and he'd returned the favour after their fight with the bitch,

they had done nothing more than cling to each other and taking comfort from the fact they weren't alone anymore.

He had approached his grandmother and Luna's father before his birthday, both of whom had been delighted and had beaming smiles as he knelt in front of the girl he loved more than life itself and asked her to be his betrothed in the middle of dinner. Neville had heard all the quips in the boy's dorms about 'playing the field' and having 'practice girlfriends' but that wasn't for him, he knew exactly what he wanted and his blond angel sitting next to him was it. When she had very quickly said 'yes' the cheering around the table was almost loud enough to be heard in Hogwarts and it was followed by much hugging and kissing with even Minerva having unshed tears in her eyes.

An observer could be forgiven for thinking that the old loony Luna Lovegood had made a return from the spaced-out demeanour she was currently projecting but nothing could be further from the truth, her gaze continually shifted from the ring she was wearing on her finger, to the powerful young wizard beside her who put it there then across to her friends who helped make it all possible.

Hermione had started a chain of events in a certain Hogwarts corridor that even now the young blond had trouble believing, though having them vouch for Neville's character had helped her trust the instant feelings she had for him. Hearing they were together in the other timeline had also helped remove any doubts there might have been, she was positive that she wanted to be Mrs Neville Longbottom and the ring on her finger shouted to the world that Neville wanted this as well.

Luna's journey from friendless, bullied, loony Lovegood to betrothed with a brother and sister who all had so much belief in her they literally put their lives in her hands astonished even her. She had felt terrible as the reality of that responsibility was brought crashing home in the fight at Grimmauld Place, Neville had held her close all night after it and explained that there was no one they trusted more to keep them safe than her. The rest of the team had played it's part as after her first salvo they never had another curse fired at them as the bitch was too busy trying to save her death eater arse. Only Dan's bullet had accidentally saved her from the reductors that Harry and

Hermione had fired and Neville's clipped her as she ran away through the 'hole' she created.

Luna was jolted out of her daydreaming when she saw Harry tearing up at receiving his mug from Joan, her new niece, and remembered Hermione's whispered remark from last night. They had agreed with dad and gran to wait until they graduated before marrying but Hermione had whispered that at the Institute they would be presenting students for their exams when they were ready for them, not when age decided they should. If ever there was an incentive to study for exams then Neville and Luna had just been handed it. She was aware her betrothed would never claim his head of house status as long as his father drew breath, what Luna was unaware of was the fact that Harry had Poppy searching the magical world while Dan and Emma 'browsed the web' for any muggle treatments or doctors who could help the Longbottoms.

Luna watched as Harry went round every child who had made him a card and thanked them, ensuring that everyone of them knew they were invited this afternoon – her brother really was something else she thought proudly.

-oOoOo-

Harry couldn't remember a time in his life when he had predicted something so accurately, he and Neville could be standing there starkers and no one would even notice unless it was Luna or Hermione. They were standing on a deck that had been built on the beach with chairs containing the guests spread out in formation but leaving an aisle down the middle, Neville and he were waiting at the front but since the main attraction appeared at the back all eyes were facing that direction.

Harry couldn't fault them as he was doing the exact same thing himself, staring at the most beautiful sight he had ever seen and thanking Merlin she was his wife. Dad led her down towards them, followed by Luna, Ginny and Joan. Harry's mind was racing away with the emotion of the occasion and thinking about just how much she meant to him when he felt the calming hand of his brother

squeeze his shoulder. "Easy there Harry, she's here and everyone's safe."

He realised his magic was flaring and could only nod his thanks to Neville, the symbolism of his wife walking towards him in her wedding dress smacked Harry like a bludger to the head. They were soul bound, loved each other more than words could say but the muggle raised part of him suddenly woke up to the fact that he and this wonderful young woman would be together for the rest of their lives.

Hermione was talking to him over their bond but she was trying very hard not to burst out laughing, her heroic husband who had fought Basilisk and dragon was falling to pieces at the sight of her in a white dress.

She was glad that their bond existed or the whole ceremony would have been a shambles, her husband was almost catatonic and she was quite literally putting words in his mouth. Hermione was battling to hold it together as the waves of love were being broadcast over their bond so it was a relieved Lady Potter when the clergy informed Harry he could kiss his bride, the real Harry Potter emerged as the man of action swept Hermione off her feet and proceeded to administer the kiss of their lives.

The glow that surrounded the kissing couple was so powerful the guests were having to shade their eyes as Harry poured his love for Hermione into the kiss, when they eventually finished he found his voice again, "I wanted to do that from the instant I laid eyes on you, holding off until given permission was extremely difficult."

He picked up Joan and turned to face everyone with his daughter in one arm and wife on the other, Neville beside him while Luna and Ginny were alongside Hermione. Harry looked to the crowd where mum and dad wore huge grins while the marauders were being given hankies from their girlfriends to dry their eyes, he couldn't help but wonder how he got so lucky.

-oOoOo-

Harry alertly glanced round the room making sure they hadn't missed anyone amongst the gun smoke, blood and gore while he wondered just how things could turn pear shape so quickly.

Their holiday had started off in Australia where their visit to the Sydney Opera House didn't go quite the way they planned, they loved the performance of 'The Pirates of Penzance' but Joan wanted to march right up to them and in her own style inform the cast that pretending to be an orphan was wrong. Harry had to explain to her that they said the same words every night and only acted as pirates while Hermione tried not to chuckle at the thought she had created a monster, Joan had wanted to kick their ankles since her mum told her that's what you do to bad people. They had to constantly remind themselves that their daughter had no concept of muggle culture and that her gran and granddad were probably the first she'd ever met.

There week in New Zealand led to their daughter discovering and falling totally in love with horse riding and wanting to take the pony home with her, Dan and Emma were confident that before too long there would be stables built at the institute.

In each of these countries they had spent time discovering as much information about the native magic lore as possible and visiting each magical village or street they could. Thus when they arrived in Argentina it was only natural that they would visit the magical section of Buenos Aires, as they passed through the bar that guarded the entrance Harry heard his name called and turned to be confronted by three of Voldemort's inner circle.

-oOoOo-

Lucius Malfoy was angry, not the anger of someone being in your parking space or eating the last piece of cake you wanted, this was an all-consuming disease that spread through every part of the death eater's body like a cancer. He had escaped to Argentina and bought himself a ten bedroom 'ranch' so wasn't exactly roughing it, the problems began after he had settled in and started to let his mind ponder just how he got into this position.

A chance meeting with Greg Goyle in Buenos Aires had Lucius reaching for his wand but Greg held his hands well away from his wand and said, "we need to talk."

Sitting with a bottle of firewhisky Greg then explained how he had met Antonin Dolohov who had the exact same problem as him, empty vault and a letter from the dark lord expressing his disappointment and promising retribution. Both death eaters had figured they'd been scammed and reckoned there were very few people who could pull it off, Lucius took some perverse pleasure when Greg told him that his name was top of the list of suspects but since he was here then Greg assumed that something similar had happened to him.

Lucius hated to confirm this but couldn't come up with another reason for being there, this also left the problem of just who did pull it off and, more importantly, what were they going to do about it. Their problem was lack of information and they agreed to meet the following week and invite Dolohov along, meanwhile they needed to learn as much as possible.

At the meeting the following week all their hopes and dreams of regaining their wealth, power and influence lay in tatters as the old newspaper in front of them had a picture of a dead George Grafton with the explanation of how the back of his head came to be missing. The changes in British law effectively handed each of them a death sentence should they ever return and without any gold to spread around the Wizengamot to fund a reversal they were basically exiled.

The three continued their weekly meetings and as time marched on only one name kept being associated with the changes happening in their homeland, Potter.

Lucius was at first so pleased he'd escaped with his life but was only now beginning to realise just how effectively they'd been duped, even Dumbledore couldn't have pulled this off so how could a teenage boy? His anger fuelled the hatred he felt for the brat until it became all consuming and the focus of all his endeavours, the fact that he was helpless to do anything about it only exacerbated the problem. The blond death eater was beginning to think it was affecting his mind as he could have sworn Harry Potter just walked into the bar but that just

couldn't be, as he recognised the mudblood he knew it had to be the brat and had shouted 'Potter!' before his brain had time to engage.

Harry and Hermione had researched Voldemort's memories to gain information on how the death eaters fought, their tactics of attacking the weakest member to force the others to try and shield them would certainly be used here. Their problem was that they were in the middle of a bar, in a foreign country and had no idea how the locals would react, there were soon going to be bodies on the floor and how many was dependant on factors outside their control.

Harry started to speak as he felt mum and dad take up positions either side of him, there was no chance this situation would be resolved by talking but he was just trying to buy a few seconds for Joan to get behind him and Hermione's confirmation she had their backs.

"That's Lord Potter to you Lucius, so this is where you and you're murdering friends are hiding out from justice, Dolohov and Goyle have both been sentenced to death as have you Malfoy."

Dan's gun was in his hand as soon as he heard the name Dolohov, kind of hard to forget the name of the bastard who 'killed' your daughter, Emma also had her shotgun in hand but her target was the creep who set that monster on Hermione though she could now see how Draco became such a tosser.

The 'all set' from his wife over their bond told him their daughter was safe and she was guarding their backs, both Potters would have to protect the other three from curses and could already feel their magic coursing through their bodies getting ready to respond.

Lucius was beyond talking, his hatred combined with the firewhisky he'd consumed saw him stand straight up and fire the death curse at Harry's chest, when the green beam of light hit the young wizard and had no effect other than he now seemed to be glowing the whole bar held it's breath. A second later Lucius Malfoy was no more; the muggle hating death eater met his end through contamination of his blood. His blood was contaminated with whatever Remus put in those shells Emma was firing because the blond death eater's now not so

pure blood was splattered everywhere as mum's torso shot had almost cut him in two.

Dolohov had the muggle bitch lined up with his favourite curse about to pass his lips when he suddenly didn't have any, he wasn't aware of this though as Dan's bullet hit him in the mouth and he was dead before he crumpled to the ground.

Goyle aimed the cruciatus curse at the little girl peering out from behind Potter, his only thought was her screams would hopefully distract them long enough for him to escape. Harry's seeker reflexes paid dividends though as his hand shot out in front of his daughter and caught the curse, that the bastard would try and hurt her ignited Harry's fury. Instead of draining the magic out of him Harry used the energy from the death curse to pour magic into the death eater and overloaded his magical core, Gregory Goyle Sr. exploded and covered everything in gore.

Goyle had actually hired two local wizards from the city's criminal elements as bodyguards but they were made sit at the other end of the bar so they couldn't overhear any conversations, they came at the group from behind but had totally dismissed Hermione as any threat. Both soon found themselves on the floor missing a limb each as the young Lady Potter let loose with two wandless reductors.

Harry was quite a sight, having survived two unforgivables and being splattered with bits of Goyle, he stood there with the power radiating off him and demanded, "Are we all finished yet? Anyone who waits till I clean myself off then comes forward to challenge us will seriously piss me off."

The thought of a seriously pissed off Potter was way too much for the clientele to deal with as they very carefully made their way out the bar.

A few personal cleaning charms later and Harry walked towards who he assumed was the bar owner, the man stood with both hands placed firmly palm down on the bar and didn't move a muscle as he attempted to be as unthreatening as possible.

Harry dropped a bag of gold on the counter, "sorry about the disturbance and mess, this will hopefully compensate you for any loss of business and pay for the cleaning. My family and I are here on holiday and our only objective was to see some sights, not look for trouble."

"Do not worry Lord Potter, the minister is my cousin and I will swear the truth that those men attacked you without provocation. If I could my lord, instead of the gold may I request a slight favour?"

That same night the sign outside had already been changed to 'Harry's Bar' with the picture of the owner standing with his arm around the young lord taking pride of place behind the counter. It was standing room only as news had spread of the 'battle of the bar' and the story was getting more outlandish with every telling, which wasn't hurting business in the slightest. Another chapter had been added to the boy who lived legend and the bar must have been the size of Hampden Park to accommodate all the witches and wizards who claimed to have witnessed the event.

-oOoOo-

It was a tired Ginny who made her way down to breakfast; she'd had the nightmare again last night. She never gets to see his face just the wrinkled old hands undressing her as she stands there helpless and alone, every night the hands get a bit further before she wakes up screaming. The dreams had been every night now for over two weeks and it wasn't coincidence that this coincided with Harry being away from the institute, Ginny had them before but never this frequent or severe. She was sure it was exactly like Hermione claims; she believed wholeheartedly that nothing bad could happen to her when Harry was here but the problem being he wasn't here.

Her friendship with the four was better than at any time but Harry would always be special in her eyes, he had saved her life twice now and she knew he wouldn't hesitate to do it again. She'd got over her fixation with the boy who lived only to find that the real Harry Potter was so much better and a bigger hero than ever. She felt her friendship with Harry pushed her to be so much more than Ginny

Weasley ever could be, that he and Poppy were offering her a life she could only have dreamed of, instead of old men abusing her body.

She thought she must be still sleeping as the small missile that was Joan Potter targeted her, as they weren't due back for days yet.

"Aunt Ginny! Sorry we missed your birthday but I've got your present in my trunk and we had a great time up until the end."

Ginny now had the young witch in her arms and looked around for her parents but only Dan and Emma were there.

"Mum and Dad have gone to get your birthday present and I'm not supposed to tell you that."

Ginny couldn't help but laugh as she hugged her 'niece' "well I won't tell them if you don't." she spun round as a very familiar voice was heard behind her.

"Your aunt Ginny is very good at keeping secrets little one."

"BILL!"

Joan found herself still in her aunt Ginny's arms but now wrapped up with this stranger's as well and the little girl wasn't sure how to react, then she saw her mum and dad smiling and knew it was ok. She had stood and watched as that bad wizard had fired a curse at her only to see her daddy catch it in his bare hand and throw it straight back at him, Joan now believed her mother that nothing bad could happen to her when her daddy was there and he was here. She hadn't even been scared as she was in her protected bubble, surrounded by her family and nothing could hurt her there.

"What are you doing here?" Ginny asked.

Bill just smiled, "the official reason is that I'm spending the next week checking the Institute wards for Gringotts best customer, unofficially I'm here as a late birthday present to you from your friends over here."

Ginny put Joan down and rushed over to hug the Potters, “thanks you two, I really missed you.”

Harry kissed her cheek, “happy birthday Gin and we’re hoping talking to Bill can help you with these nightmares.”

Ginny looked shocked that they would know about them but Hermione gave her a hug, “you’re becoming a good friend Gin, and we do anything to help our friends.”

Poppy was watching worriedly, she hoped her daughter understood why she had phoned Harry about the nightmares and it didn’t hurt the mother / daughter trust they’d slowly been building. It was obvious to the healer that her dreams were getting stronger due to her saviour being on the other side of the world, her rational side was telling her she was perfectly safe but in her sleep that was no help. Speaking with her favourite brother should help her to see that treating children the way she had been was not normal behaviour nor something Bill approved of.

Poppy was sure it was her other brothers casual acceptance of the situation that compounded the trauma for her adopted daughter, Bill telling her they were wrong would hopefully break the cycle as she couldn’t live with the Potters for the rest of her life – much as she’d like to. The healer was relived when her daughter glanced over and mouthed ‘thanks mum,’ this parent lark wasn’t as easy as it looked but Poppy was loving every minute of it and taking the good with the bad.

Ginny whirled on the Potters, “please tell me you didn’t cut your holiday short because of me?”

“No,” answered Harry “we had a run in with some death eaters and it kind of spoiled the holiday mood so we came home. Lucius Malfoy finally paid for what he did to you last year.”

Ginny couldn’t help but throw her arms around him, “thank you Harry.”

“It’s actually mum you should be thanking, she was quick as lightning with that shotgun of hers.”

She did as Harry suggested and hugged Emma Granger, “it’s ok Ginny I’ve seen the Basilisk and remember Hermione was petrified too, he finally paid for his crimes against our family.”

The breakfast table all wanted to hear the details but Joan’s, “my dad caught a curse aimed at me with his hand and threw it back at the bad wizard,” had folk humouring her until Dan confirmed it.

The rest of the day was spent catching up with events though a phone call to a very pleased Amelia Bones confirmed the Argentinean ministry weren’t even considering any charges and delighted to get rid of some vermin, they had enough criminals of their own to deal with without importing any from Britain.

The Potters were pooped and after a lazy day headed off to bed after dinner, it was Harry’s turn to tuck Joan in and he could see his daughter had something on her mind. Joan was small for her age with long dark hair but it was her brilliant blue eyes that Harry thought were her best feature, like Hermione you could see the intelligence and thirst for knowledge behind them but what told him she was troubled was her nose. She had a beautiful button nose but when she was concentrating really hard or troubled about something Joan’s nose would ‘twitch’, Harry and Hermione thought it was adorable and the cutest thing they’d ever seen and the fact that it gave him prior warning she was troubled about something didn’t hurt either.

“What’s bothering you love, you know we can talk about anything to us.”

In one long burst Joan got it off her chest, “I’m sorry daddy, I know I was supposed to make myself small and not be peaking to see what was going on. I just knew I was safe but you had to do that to the nasty wizard and for that I’m sorry, I promise the next time I will curl into the smallest ball I can.”

Harry hugged his daughter and kissed her forehead, "oh darling, I just hope there never is a next time but if he hadn't seen you he would have aimed at gran or granddad because they think they're helpless muggles."

Joan was chuckling, "they sure showed those bad wizards they're not helpless."

Her laugh was contagious and Harry joined her, "they sure did love, are you ok now?"

She hugged and kissed him as an affirmative before lying sleepily down, "goodnight dad, love you."

Harry tucked the covers round her neck before kissing his almost sleeping daughter, "we love you to, goodnight Joan."

Out on the terrace Dan and Emma were sitting with brandies in their hands as a nightcap when they were joined by Remus and Pomona, "are you two all right?" their werewolf friend asked.

It was Emma who answered, "actually Remus I'm fine which has got me slightly worried, I nearly cut a man in half with a shotgun and was sighted on the other when I saw Harry had it covered yet I feel no remorse at all. If you'd seen that bloody great snake beast Remus perhaps you would understand, it almost killed Hermione, Harry and Ginny and today the bastard who engineered the whole thing got better than he deserved. If I could have made it slow and painful I would have, does this make me a bad person Remus because I would do it again without a second's hesitation."

"If you're a bad person then there's no hope for any of us Emma, think back to that first night when the kids told you this was a war and you ended up in the thick of it just because your daughter loves Harry. You swore you didn't want to be helpless again and you have achieved that and more, the man you killed would have killed Harry and Dan, then taken his time over you, Hermione and Joan. I am classed by the British ministry as a dark creature but that bastard just wasn't human and didn't deserve to live, you have done a great

service to the world in general today and I wouldn't be surprised if there wasn't an award coming your way for this."

"The only reward we want Remus is to see our family being able to live in relative peace, being in the thick of it was so much better than sitting waiting on a phone call to see if everyone's ok, I couldn't go back to doing that."

Pomona was listening to the conversation but thinking back on the last few weeks and the effect they could have on the rest of her life. When they had returned from London and the fight with that evil bitch she had been so relieved and, after dragging Remus to her room to tear a strip off him she ended up ripping his clothes off instead. Remus was still on an adrenalin high and his usual voice of reason was bludgeoned into silence by another emotion that took over as Pomona threw off her robes.

It was hours later when the doubt began to set in for both of them, Pomona was forty five to Remus's thirty six and although this was not a great difference especially in the magical world she hadn't exactly been fighting suitors of with a sharp stick. Pomona had resigned herself to a life similar to Poppy or Minerva and had thought she would be quite happy with that, now this gentle powerhouse of a man had changed her whole outlook on life and she knew her old one held no appeal now.

Remus on the other hand felt he had taken advantage of the situation having expected it to take months to reach this point, if at all. He planned on letting Pomona view his transformation next week before they even thought about taking this relationship any further, now it would kill him if she couldn't accept what he was.

Pomona happily said she wouldn't miss the event and hadn't treated her wizard any different before or since, she was far more worried about the event she missed the following week. Pomona hadn't been a virgin but could hardly be called experienced either and it had been years since she had been intimate with someone, Remus wasn't exactly thinking with his big head and the thought of contraception didn't even enter their minds. It was not what entered Pomona's mind that had her in such a tizzy, she was going to have a quiet word with

Poppy tonight and didn't know what she was going to say to Remus if the quiet word gave the result she expected.

Therefore it was an emotional Pomona who answered Emma, "I couldn't agree more, sitting here knowing that you lot were going up against Bellatrix Lestrange was some of the worst time of my life and I'm not stupid, I know it's going to be Voldemort soon. I just wished I'd trained with you because being left behind is soul destroying. They say your mind thinks the worse case scenario but I can't think of anything worse than going against those two."

It was Dan who answered this time, "not going against them."

-oOoOo-

Ron Weasley was in the shower trying to remove grass stains from his butt cheeks and thinking to himself that he was finally getting a handle on this betrothal business. Millie's dad had promised him a new broom if he made his house Quidditch team and with Potter, Woods, Fred and George all leaving he thought he had a chance at it. He'd been flying for a few hours when Millie had appeared and was not pleased.

"Ronald, you have been ignoring me just so you can fly that stupid broom."

"Millie I want to become a professional Quidditch player and need to practice, this is for our future together."

This was also exactly the right thing to say as Millie's mood changed in a microsecond and she showed her betrothed how much she appreciated his efforts the only way she knew how, she pounced on her betrothed there and then.

Ron knew the Bulstrode's weren't Malfoy rich but they certainly weren't Weasley poor and he would be going to Hogwarts tomorrow as the first Weasley ever to attend with new robes and books. Since that day in the courtroom and his acceptance of his situation things had been looking up for Ron Weasley, he felt another hand begin

helping to remove the grass stains which only confirmed his hypothesis that things were certainly looking up.

A/N thanks for reading and please review

NOTE: Hampden Park is the National Football (soccer) Stadium of Scotland and seats 52,000 spectators.

Chapter 23

Remus John Lupin sat drinking coffee on his balcony as the rising sun not only reflected off the gold band that adorned the ring finger of his left hand but the tears running down his cheeks as well. Remus had lived a hard life and, after many years of practice building his defences the werewolf practically never shed a tear. The difference here was that he had no defence whatsoever against tears of joy having only witnessed the phenomenon on others before now.

He had awoke this morning wrapped in his wife's arms with memories of their lovemaking still in the air, he gently left their bed and stood gazing in awe at this woman who was not only his wife but carrying their unborn son in her womb.

His tears had started then and now halfway through his coffee they still hadn't abated, it was then he felt her arms slip around his neck as she gently kissed his cheek while asking him if he was all right. Remus didn't know how to answer and found himself taking marriage advice from his fourteen-year-old married honouree nephew.

Harry had told him that no marriage could survive if based on lies as the four of them had sat down to a dinner, prepared by Dobby and Winky in this very house two days before their wedding. They had proceeded to tell Pomona everything that they had told Remus as he held his wife to be while she cried at what the fates held in store for people she loved.

Pomona had been hoping she could convince Remus that since he was going to be a married man and an expectant father he could be dissuaded from going along on any more 'missions'. Knowing the truth and the type of man her future husband was she realised it was impossible for him to abandon his post.

As Harry and Hermione were preparing to leave that night they hit the couple with one last shock by handing them the keys to the house as a wedding present. The house had five bedrooms and was one of six in a secluded cove overlooking the Mediterranean about fifty kilometres south of the Institute.

What Remus and Pomona didn't know was that the Potters owned all the houses in the cove and over the next few years their neighbours would include the Blacks, Longbottoms, Grangers and Potters.

The Italian ministry had a whole different attitude to the werewolf problem and treated the condition as an illness, marriage was actually encouraged as it meant that the sufferer would have support during their transformation. They had also looked extensively into children born to people carrying the disease and had yet to find a case of an affected child. It would seem the only way to propagate the species was by the transformed werewolf biting someone who wasn't one which explained why the compulsion to do so was so strong. The Italian ministry was trying to eradicate the disease with the use of wolfsbane to prevent any new sufferers being created, a decision that the werewolf population of the country gave it's wholehearted backing to.

It was an accumulation of these things that led to Pomona finding her husband of four days sitting with tears running down his cheeks.

He led his wife onto his knee and held her tight as he spoke, "I am so far beyond all right that it's scaring the living daylight out of me. What we have here is most peoples' dream but with my condition I couldn't even allow myself that luxury, the pain of knowing it could never be a reality was just too much to bear. Yet now we're married, sitting in our own home with our son growing happily inside you and today we go back to jobs we both love. I've had so little happiness in my life that it's all just a bit overwhelming sometimes."

Pomona kissed her husband, she had truthfully been worried about telling him she was pregnant but those concerns proved groundless, he had spun her through the air before stopping suddenly and sitting her on a chair. She was about to protest that she wasn't that fragile when Remus dropped to one knee and took out a ring, he'd apparently bought it days ago and was waiting on the right moment to pop the question. Their wedding had quickly followed and been a quiet affair at the institute before coming here for their work-shortened honeymoon.

She held her husband's face and stared directly into his eyes, "Remus you are a good man, a great husband and you'll be a wonderful father. I will do my best to let you know that you are loved every single day of our lives together, you also have an extended family that loves you very much and I'm delighted to be part of it."

Harry had welcomed her to the 'family' after their disclosures that night, finding out that the three of them choose her former house was probably the only good part of the full back story for the pregnant witch. Pomona thought this version of time was so much better and had received no arguments from the others at the table. She knew how close the eight were and now understood the reason why, they all shared a common goal that centred round Harry Potter and the demise of Voldemort.

She joked to Remus that maybe it was her hormones changing that were messing up his emotions, she was only half joking when she said he was welcome to the labour pains as well.

This cheered Remus up and he kissed her before suggesting breakfast, after all it wouldn't do for the headmistress to be late on the first day of school.

-oOoOo-

Draco was kissing his tearful girlfriend goodbye and promising to call her on his newly acquired mobile phone, he was a little taken aback that he could talk to Trish from hundreds of miles away with the muggle device. He had met her parents who had taken an immediate liking to him and asked if he wanted to spend Christmas holidays with their family, Trish had explained he was an orphan who was attending a boarding school in Massachusetts on full scholarship.

Draco's original intention of using Trish as something to help the summer pass so he could get back to his own kind had quickly fallen apart with the realisation that she cared for him more than any of his friends or even his parents did. This muggle girl had been his constant companion all through the best summer of his life and he had no hesitation of accepting their offer for the Christmas holidays.

Draco didn't know if Trish was the one for him and quite frankly at the moment he didn't care, he was just going to take things as they come and enjoy his life as much as possible. He was certain of one thing though, if he and Trish did eventually split up it wouldn't be because she was a muggle. Draco had come to realize that it wasn't blood, birth or breeding but the person who counted.

With that Harry would consider the small fortune he had spent on the former Slytherin good value for money.

-oOoOo-

Ron Weasley marched onto the platform with Millie on his arm but more intent on displaying his new robes than his betrothed. Ron thought this could be a stellar year for him, no twins to prank him, no Potter or Granger to lead him into danger and he could almost feel his new broom under him when he took his rightful place on the Gryffindor Quidditch team. He was prepared to be magnanimous and wait to next year before becoming team captain along with prefect.

The food at the feast had hardly time to give the red head indigestion before Dumbledore destroyed his dreams, it was bad enough Percy the prat was his head of house but no Quidditch – that was illegal surely.

Dumbles was giving this competition the hard sell and Ron's interest peaked at the phrase 'eternal glory' but it was the thousand-galleon prize that finally made him sit up and take notice, only to have it snatched away by an age limit that he couldn't meet. The explanation for this that the competition was extremely dangerous ended any and all interest Ron had of being a competitor, he slunk off to his dorm knowing he would be alone this year but hadn't reckoned on finding Millie waiting on him.

Albus was trying to present a calm exterior as he sat through the feast looking down on his domain but inside he was seething with anger at the very noticeable gaps in the house tables. That little bastard Potter, just who does the little shit think he is? He had tried to give the Tri-Wizard tournament a big build up but since most of the hall were ineligible and of those who were only one could take part in

the minds of almost every student this in no way made up for the loss of a year's Quidditch.

He also had to try and placate Horace who was looking over the students like the head judge at a dog show and coming back with the result that there was little of pedigree here. Horace didn't give a shit about blood purity, influence and how he could get his hands on it was the potions professors stock in trade. He collected people like others acquired chocolate frog cards and set himself up as a self-styled favour broker with his 'commission' helping to fill his years with life's little luxuries.

Wood's gasp of horror at the no Quidditch announcement hadn't escaped the old wizard's notice either meaning another compulsion charm for the former team captain tonight, he would soon be up to a charm a day to keep the impetuous boy under his control.

It was a very disgruntled Hogwarts as the staff and students making their way to have a night's sleep before classes started in the morning, Millicent Bulstrode could probably lay claim to being the only happy person in the castle.

-oOoOo-

The contrast at the Potter Institute couldn't have been more pronounced with an almost party atmosphere prevailing between the students, staff and occupants of the orphanage. The only announcement that drew any dissent was when Pomona declared she was unable to teach potions, this was instantly forgotten as the deafening cheers greeted the news that the new Mrs Lupin was pregnant.

Sirius had been in a bit of a funk at dinner last night when Luna of all people pointed out the blindingly obvious, "Sirius we've only ever had Snape teach us potions so you don't exactly have a lot to live up to. I'm quite sure Joan would make a better teacher than the greasy git."

The small witch in question currently had Crookshanks on her knee with Hedwig perched on the back of her chair as both familiars vied

for Joan's attention. "Who's the greasy git Snape?" she innocently asked.

"He was a teacher at Hogwarts who was also a bad wizard but your mother kicked his arse," Sirius replied jovially "I just wish I had been there to see it."

Joan seemed to think for a minute while making sure to stroke owl and Kneazle equally before asking, "why would they let a bad wizard teach at a school full of children?"

This earned her a kiss on the cheek from her dad, "told you she was smart, only eight and already she has a better grasp of the situation than Albus bloody Dumbledore."

It was finally Amber who got through to Sirius, "it's my first day teaching to, would you like to come up and we can compare lesson plans?"

Sirius almost choked gulping down coffee in his haste to assist his girlfriend while the rest of the company struggled to contain their laughter.

At the feast Seamus thought that all the coaching on girls from his big cousin over the summer was already paying dividends. He was sitting with his arm around an unprotesting Ginny, which, according to his cousin was the sign a girl wanted you to go a little further. He was keeping up his banal banter as his hand slowly made it's way down her shoulder before being attacked by a pitbull that was trying to pull his arm out it's socket. The Irish lad looked up into the very angry eyes of one Neville Longbottom, but this was not the Neville that he had shared a dorm with for three years. This was a Neville that had easily whipped Malfoy's arse and looked ready to do the same to him.

Neville didn't shout but there was no doubting the menace in his words, "move it or loose it, your choice but make it fast."

Seamus didn't like the second option so moved it as far away from Ginny as Neville's vice-like grip allowed, he was extremely relieved when Neville released his arm and gently led Ginny away.

The whole table had watched the byplay, which wasn't over as Luna took the now vacant seat, "you all heard what happened to Ginny at the end of last term?" nods of agreement allowed Luna to continue, "then you are all aware of what fate awaited her if Harry hadn't acted?" Visible tremors came from every female at the table.

"Ginny is having a hard time understanding how her former family could have done that to her and, even though she escaped her fate she still has nightmares over it."

"That's perfectly understandable," answered Daphne who'd spoken to Ginny at the open weekend and was appalled at the story.

"What Ginny needs now are friends, not morons trying to paw her." Her eyes were boring into Seamus who was defensively rubbing his arm.

"She should have said something then, and just what gives your boyfriend the right to grab me like that?"

"Ginny only trusts two boys, Harry and my Neville and they're both very protective of her. Neville showed great restraint with you, the auror that knocked me over had to spend two days in St Mungo's"

"What spell did he use?" A curious Daphne asked.

It was actually Susan who couldn't wait to answer after having the event described to her in great detail by her aunt, "Neville didn't use any spells, he took that auror apart with his bare hands before they got ready to take on the full department, the four of them put down ten aurors in six seconds."

There was silence at the table as they all looked towards Neville who had his arm round Ginny and was speaking to her.

Hannah just had to ask, "Em Luna, are you ok with your boyfriend having his arm around another girl like that?"

“ Oh Neville's not my boyfriend,” Luna exclaimed, deliberately drawing out the painful silence before putting them out of their misery, “Neville is my betrothed and Ginny is one of our best friends.”

There were squeals from the girls present as demands were made to see the ring while all the boys silently and independently came to the decision that they wouldn't be laying a finger on Ginny Pomfrey.

Ginny was slowly calming down in the safety of Neville's embrace, she knew she should have told Seamus to piss off and that would have been the end of the matter but she had froze at his first touch. He had taken her silence as a green light to proceed to the next stage and only Neville's intervention had saved the situation from going any further, Seamus Finnigan feeling her up is not something she considered as desirable. It all came back to the two boys she trusted, Neville and Harry were men amongst boys who treated her as well as Bill and Charlie. She had come to the decision that any boy interested in her was going to have to match up to those standards, she couldn't see herself dating any time soon and that was just fine with Ginny Heather Pomfrey.

-oOoOo-

Bellatrix Lestrange found herself caring for her lord while the rat was away establishing if the Weasley boy had returned to Hogwarts, she also found herself questioning her life choices. Before the Potter brat her lord was handsome and charismatic but with powerful, influential and utterly ruthless added to the mix. His death eaters were the badest people on the planet and kicked arse almost unopposed.

She couldn't help but compare that to there current situation where this creature, a one-armed one-eared witch and a wizard whose greatest talent was turning into a rat was all they had. They had no money, power or influence and were reduced to robbing muggle stores at night for food and necessities.

What really worried her was this creature thought that as soon as he returned to a body people would once more be flocking to worship at his feet, from Wormtail's experience and her own encounter in the Black family manor she seriously doubted that was going to happen.

Bella was often accused of not playing with a full deck and this was an image she cultivated because she was a very smart lady, her name struck terror into her opponents, which always gave her an edge in a fight.

The fight at Grimmauld Place had greatly affected the witch, she wasn't sure if it was being seriously outmatched for the first time ever or the fact that she lost her dark mark along with her arm but Bella was now looking at things differently and not liking what she was seeing.

Her time in Azkaban was bad but she suspected her master's ordeal was a lot worse and that great intellect was now the wrong side of insane, with the current political atmosphere sweeping the country they had nothing to offer potential new recruits.

Bones had made it crystal clear, possessing a dark mark was a death sentence and would also see your possessions seized, a high price to pay for being encouraged to rape and torture a few muggles. Her master was certain all he had to do was kill Harry Potter and the world would shudder at his name before paying homage to the greatest wizard who ever lived, Bella suspected that even if he managed the task Potter would become a martyr that would unite everyone against her master.

She was between the proverbial rock and a hard place but her options were severely limited, there was no place in Britain that was safe for Bella and she had no funds to go anywhere else. She was tied to this creature that used to be her master by the simple fact that she had no other options open to her, she just wished Wormtail would hurry up as the creature really freaked the pureblood out and it was becoming harder to hide these feelings.

-oOoOo-

Life at the Institute settled down and although everyone was working hard they were enjoying it, Sirius always had a flair for being the centre of attention and now he got to be that in front of his classes every day. He originally followed Pomona's lesson plans to the letter

but as his confidence grew the new potions professor was starting to adapt them to suite his own inimitable style of teaching.

Sirius thought back to the conversation with his mother's portrait and how he had decided to get some direction into his life, well he now had a job he was growing to love, an extended family he really loved and a woman he absolutely adored. The only cloud on the horizon was their approaching clash with Voldemort, Sirius swore that when they defeated him and if he survived then he was definitely going to do a Moony and ask a Sprout to marry him.

A weekend in New York for Hermione's birthday was the highlight of September, with Joan, Neville, Luna, Ginny, mum and dad there as well they had a ball. A night out on Broadway to see "The Wizard of Oz" left Dan and Emma answering questions all evening and they thought this could be a great teaching exercise, to let the magically raised children see where most muggles perceptions of witches and wizards originated.

Everyone knew this was the calm before the storm but the first storm cloud was unexpected when it arrived. The last signature on the plea for help ensured Harry and Hermione couldn't ignore it; they arranged to meet with Pomona and Minerva to see what was possible.

The headmistress could sense something was troubling the young couple so asked right out what the problem was, the answer from Harry was totally unexpected but she also couldn't help but wince at the last name and vowed to help any way she could.

"I've received a plea for help from some students at Hogwarts, all have a Quidditch connection with me but claim the standards of teaching at Hogwarts have slipped so badly that they now fear for their exam results and are beseeching us to allow them to transfer here. Apparently potions is the only subject that has improved while Defence, Transfiguration, Charms and Herbology are all being taught by eighteen year olds who don't seem to be receiving any help from the headmaster. Oliver Wood's teaching is so erratic that they think he is under a spell and since I know he would never turn his back on a career in Quidditch to teach I have to agree with them. The problems are that they are all older than our current students and

could we accept these six without opening floodgates that would see others applying as well. The names are Katie Bell, who's sitting her OWL's, sixth year's Angelina Johnson, Lee Jordan, Alicia Spinnet and Roger Davies with NEWT student Cedric Diggory."

Pomona knew the fate of Cedric in the last time line and, even though they had made many changes, the thought of getting one of her favourite students out of the tournament altogether was a powerful incentive.

Hermione had felt how much Cedric's death affected Harry and this was a golden opportunity to insure that couldn't happen again, it would also really piss Albus Dumbledore off to not only lose his best contestant but Angelina would have been a strong contender as well.

"I think we could quite easily handle the timetable aspect of it, with only six students having three different levels in one class wouldn't matter. They would still be taught their subjects better than Percy Weasley could manage; Albus has made these appointments with no regard to the education the students would receive. I really don't think Hogwarts is going to survive this," said Minerva.

Pomona had a worried expression on her face before Harry reassured her, "the Potter Institute will remain open and in Italy for many, many years, we are gradually moving out of Britain all together and would only ever consider returning if their laws fell into line with those we live under here. As it will probably take decades for that to happen we will only be visitors in our own country and are actually considering taking out Italian Citizenship."

This came as a great relief to Pomona as her husband and son would be sneered at in the current British wizarding society but she was still headmistress and had to make decisions based on that. "The biggest problem I can see is our library is currently only stocked with books up to OWL level, I know that was Hermione and Emma's priority but we could have a student taking his NEWT's this year."

"Mum and I are sorting through the other books and will have the library up to NEWT level by Christmas, Cedric could have a reusable

portkey to Potter Manor Library which rivals Hogwarts and should contain anything he's looking for."

The nodding heads seemed to signal that everyone was happy with that idea so Harry pushed for a decision, "I think we really need to move quickly because if the old goat gets wind of this then his wand will be firing out obliviate spells quicker than mum's automatic pistol."

They all agreed to go for it but this brought out the other problem, the rest of Hogwarts wanting to transfer here. Again Harry solved the problem, "students wanting to leave Hogwarts for a better education is not our fault and with the orphanage based here we will be at full capacity. I agree with Minerva though, this could spell the beginning of the end for Hogwarts. They will have to fire Dumbledore, completely revamp the staff and syllabus then spend lots of gold on the castle improving facilities. Whether there is the political and financial backing to do that is again not our problem, I am hardly likely to donate gold to an institution that we are in direct competition with."

It hurt everyone in the room that the situation at Hogwarts had got so dire that closure seemed a real danger but they had responsibilities to the students who had signed up to attend the Institute and that had to take priority over sentimentality.

Harry phoned Amelia to do something he hated, asking for a favour. As he was also reporting a suspected crime and the favour was more administrative than anything else he was confident she would say yes.

-oOoOo-

The atmosphere inside Hogwarts was that of a wet weekend in Scunthorpe, there was no Quidditch, no house cup and the only thing worth commenting on was when Romilda Vane thought she would make a play for the new Ron Weasley in the great hall. Even that was over in seconds as Millicent Bulstrode snatched the girl up by her long dark hair and tossed the screaming witch the full length of the Gryffindor table. Professor prat aka Percy rushed over to officiate when Millicent just pointed at her betrothal ring and stared at her future brother-in-law daring the professor to try and punish her. A situation that McGonagall would have dealt with in seconds saw the

new head of house back down from a fourteen-year-old witch, changed days in Hogwarts.

Therefore the arrival of the minister and head of the DMLE with the accompanying aurors made everyone sit up and take notice, a sense of anticipation swept through the hall as the five walked towards the head table.

It wasn't strictly necessary for Amelia to be here but she had invited herself along as any opportunity to stick it to Dumbledore was not to be missed in her book. Her years of being an auror meant it was second nature for her to automatically scan any room she entered and the great hall of Hogwarts was sending her signals that she didn't like.

The atmosphere seemed to be one mostly of depression and when she glanced at the top table it was immediately obvious where one of the problems lay, the kids were being taught by kids. She would have to talk to Harry about their agreement to take on Voldemort first as Albus was doing untold damage to their society with his blatant disregard to the educational needs of Hogwarts students.

She also couldn't help but notice Percy Weasley looked as if he hadn't slept in weeks and was beginning to lose his hair while Oliver Wood actually had a nervous tick at his left eye as the old fool sat on that ridiculous golden throne and ignored the fact that his world was collapsing down around his ears.

"Good afternoon minister, to what do we owe the pleasure of this visit?" Dumbledore barely kept the sarcasm out of his voice.

Amelia on the other hand was all sweetness and light as she slipped the knife between Dumbledore's ribs, "oh we just popped in to let you know that your petition to have Igor Karkaroff, the Durmstrang headmaster given diplomatic immunity was unanimously rejected. Any death eater entering our country will face the same fate as the rest of their brethren – no exceptions."

Albus tried to bluster, "but surely as a visiting headmaster he should be shown the reverence that position deserves?"

Again Amelia kept her voice light as she twisted the knife, “the only head I know that deserves reverence is Headmistress Lupin who’s doing a wonderful job and loved by her students, I know Susan thinks the world of her. The days of people carrying a dark mark being given respect are gone forever, they don’t deserve anything but the veil of death which is exactly what awaits them should they set foot in Britain.”

Amelia was delighted by the old goat’s reaction as not only did her barb strike home but the news of a Mrs Lupin being Headmistress had shocked him to his core, now for phase two while he was off balance.

“We have received a worrying report from a concerned parent about a professor teaching here, Oliver Woods could you come down here a second please?” Amelia was still smiling and she hadn’t even needed to lie, Harry was concerned and a parent as she watched the young man walk round the table towards them as Albus only now realised he should have protested.

The fifth member of their team was a healer from St Mungo’s in auror robes who took less than thirty seconds to confirm that the young man was the victim of multiple compulsion charms, it was a wonder he was still functioning. A nod to Amelia and the healer used an St Mungo’s emergency portkey to get them both to the wizarding hospital, these portkeys went out through all wards, as it wouldn’t do to be injured and be unable to get to hospital until you were dragged outside your own protection wards.

Before Albus could say anything about the abduction of his defence professor Amelia delivered the final blow with a sickly sweet smile on her face, “just one final small point, the following students have asked for a transfer to the Potter Institute for Sorcery and Spells and have been accepted. Here are their forms signed by their parents and since I’m visiting Lord Potter this afternoon they can leave with us to save you any trouble with arrangements.”

Shacklebolt had just stood back and admired his mentor’s handling of the whole situation and she had impressed the hell out of him, her

sweet smile hiding the vicious bitch underneath as she had just well and truly shafted the self styled 'leader of the light'. He knew that his own style would have ended in a confrontation while Amelia had even managed to insult the bastard and still remain smiling.

Albus looked like a volcano ready to blow it's top, he couldn't see a way around this and the bitch had even taken away his option to play for time. "I was unaware that Potter's school had the capability to put students through their exams."

"Oh you don't need to worry about that, Lord Potter provides the best facilities I've ever seen to his students and has some of the smartest and most experienced professors in Europe teaching there. Its only problem is size but when you aim to be the best there's nothing wrong with a bit of exclusivity, is there?"

Shack was having trouble holding his laughter in, not satisfied with shafting the old bugger, Amelia had just dropped his britches and spanked his arse in front of the whole school. This was absolutely priceless.

Dumbledore practically threw the forms at Percy before storming out the hall leaving the head of Gryffindor to read out the student's names.

The jubilation expressed by those leaving seemed to make the students left behind feel even worse, Cho Chang was in tears as her new boyfriend tried to console the beautiful witch.

"I'll talk to Harry for you, he's a really nice bloke" Cedric said as he held her in his arms.

She shook her head, "if I had been mean to him then he probably would have accepted an apology but I was terrible to someone he now apparently thinks of as his sister, he will never forgive that. I've made my bed and now need to lie in it but I'll miss you terribly."

He kissed her before saying, "I'll still talk to Harry, even if it's only a visit I'll get to see you somehow. We both know this place is going

downhill fast and I've worked too hard to let my future be affected by professors who can't answer your questions because their knowledge is barely beyond mine."

"Father's already trying to get me into another school for next year but we'll manage to stay together somehow," she kissed the Hufflepuff before he had to leave.

-oOoOo-

Emma was alerted that something was going on by the decidedly female squeals of delight emanating from the terrace, she turned the corner to see her son being set upon by three beautiful witches. The only thing that kept her from interfering was the sight of Hermione standing laughing though she did notice her daughter had rather a tight hold on Joan who seemed ready to kick some ankles.

"Its ok, these are Harry's team mates and this happens after every game, usually because he's just caught the snitch and won it."

The three girls then descended on Hermione and were soon all fawning over the adorable Joan.

Harry then approached the three guys and shook their hands though Cedric asked him for a quick word, "Harry, I've just left a very emotional girlfriend behind..."

Harry cut him off before he could mention Cho by name, "I'm sorry Cedric but we had to make some serious adjustments just to let you six attend, we are at full capacity now and can't squeeze anyone else in. We currently have one wing set up for use as an orphanage until their new building is ready and just can't push the boat out any further no matter who it is."

Cedric had to accept that but asked if he could portkey into Hogsmead when the Hogwarts students were visiting, Harry didn't have a problem with that and even suggested his girlfriend might like to portkey to Italy for a visit. Naples had Hogsmead whipped from every conceivable angle.

While Brutus got the new students settled into rooms Amelia asked for a word with the Potters.

Shack, Tonks and Connie joined them as Dobby served refreshments while Amelia aired her concerns, "Harry I know we agreed to go after Voldemort first but Dumbledore is doing untold damage to the students and even staff at Hogwarts, I don't know how much longer I can continue to take no action."

Harry deliberated over his answer as he discussed the best way to handle this over the bond with his wife, head-on seemed to be the only option, "Amelia, can I ask what plans you have in place for Hogwarts once you remove it's headmaster?"

Amelia seemed taken aback by the question and glanced at Shack who just shrugged, "I had assumed that you and your staff would move back to Hogwarts, taking over the running of the castle." Even as the words left her mouth she realised the absurdity of that statement and was not in the least surprised by Hermione's answer.

"Amelia our intention was always to remain at the Institute, we agreed to take care of the Voldemort problem and think that is quite sufficient. Hogwarts has been discussed amongst the staff and us but you have to look at it from our point of view. Even with Voldemort and his followers gone the opinions that matter in magical Britain are almost exclusively purebloods. To them I'm a mudblood, Remus is a dark creature, and Pomona will be vilified for marrying him then don't even mention what their unborn son's treatment will be. My parent's could have ended up in Azkaban for protecting me while our wonderful daughter was continually overlooked because of her unknown blood status; Amber is a squib while Filius is of mixed race. Look at what we're creating here then ask yourselves why we would want to give this up to return to the pureblood bigotry of Britain."

The minister was beginning to realise the enormity of the problem in front of her, she was at heart an auror and had been concentrating on what she saw as the biggest threat to their society. It was just beginning to sink in that even total success in her objective would still leave their world in dire straights.

“Amelia I like you as a friend and even minister but please don’t ask me to support something that actively encourages bigotry, every student at the Institute pays the same fees and every single item in the building was purchased locally with the same price being charged for everyone.”

A bemused Tonks had no idea what Harry was alluding to and asked him to explain, when he did it made her blood boil.

“At our best guess the Grangers were being charged twelve times the fees of someone like Malfoy, they were also being charged extra for every item they bought in the alley as the pureblood families all get discounts. We are currently withholding printing this news as our priority has always been to take down Voldemort and we don’t need this distracting us from that goal.”

Amelia had become aware of this since becoming minister and Susan attending the Institute but the other three were furious.

“Does that mean my father would have been overcharged for me attending Hogwarts?” Tonks asked.

It was Hermione who answered, “As he is a muggle born the answer would almost certainly be yes but that’s not even the worst of it, the curriculum at Hogwarts has been ‘dumbed down’ because the purebloods were struggling with the harder aspects and being continually out performed by people beneath their station. The OWL’s and NEWT’s sat here will be the more difficult European version.”

This was news to Amelia who could only shake her head at the disaster waiting to happen she’d inherited from Fudge.

Harry summed their problem up nicely, “to get the best teachers and facilities costs a fair bit of gold, the purebloods won’t pay the price as their children usually just trade on the family name for positions or to set up a suitable marriage. Without the rest of us in Britain to subsidise their lifestyle I don’t see how it can continue, it won’t happen overnight but if businesses continue to offer subsidies without

the other customers there to offset losses then they won't be in business for long. We suspect Hogwarts may be amongst the first casualties and take no pleasure from that fact, the Institute is bursting at the seams and our only required entry qualification is that they don't support bigotry."

The four people who left the Institute to return to the British ministry all had a lot on their minds, none of them could fault the Potters for what they were doing. The purebloods had looked after their own interests for centuries so how could they complain when someone started taking care of the rest of the wizarding world? Each of them was also certain that there would be uproar when they found out what was happening, fair play was a fine ideal as long as you were the one that was winning and the purebloods wouldn't take this lying down.

-oOoOo-

Cho Chang was sitting in the Ravenclaw common room writing a letter to Cedric, the headmaster seemed to be trying to cheer them up by announcing a visit to Hogsmead on Halloween. The other schools would be arriving in two days and a feast was planned for that night, now the following day had a trip to Hogsmead and their traditional Halloween feast would be the precursor for choosing the champions. Cho couldn't care less; it was the thought of seeing Cedric in three days that had her smiling. All she could hope for was that Harry would allow him to come; spending Halloween in Hogsmead with Cedric would be so romantic.

-oOoOo-

Wormtail was for once a happy rat, as he made his way across the grounds heading for the forest to apparate back with the good news. The old fool had played right into their hands, it would be a much easier task to take the Weasley boy from Hogsmead than trying to spirit him out the castle. He was also happy that Granger's ugly Kneazle was no longer about, that beast nearly had him on more than one occasion. His master would have his new body on Halloween and Peter would love to see someone ask the Dark Lord to raise his sleeve, now that would be something worth watching and a change from him being on the receiving end of his masters wand.

Thanks for reading and please review.

Chapter 24

Harry and Hermione walked arm in arm along their beach as the sun set over the Mediterranean, the melody of the waves was continually interrupted by the delightful sound of their daughter laughing as she played the strangest game of tag ever seen with Hedwig. The noises coming from the snowy owl's beak could be mistaken for chuckling as she flew around the little girl, both of their familiars adored Joan but Crookshanks didn't love anyone enough to come this close to the sea.

Jillian Green had remarked on how surprised, yet delighted she was with the obvious changes in Joan, before meeting them she was a shy, quiet child who'd somehow mustered up the courage to ask Harry to sign her prize possession. Now she was so demonstrative and outgoing, seemingly intent on grabbing life with both hands to make up for lost time.

Harry was sure he understood the reason for this as Joan, like himself, wasn't sure how long all her good fortune was going to last so was making the best of it before someone shouted 'times up' and she was forced to return to her old life. Harry felt the same way every morning he woke up with Hermione in his arms, he knew the request he was about to make would be a hopeless one but he felt he had to bring it up.

"Are you sure about this love, things have changed since we made our plans."

Hermione shut Harry up by kissing him fiercely, when they came up for air she gave him the answer he was expecting. "Some things will never change, we agreed to be together forever and that's the way it's going to be my Lord Potter. Side by side no matter what comes our way."

He just held onto this wonderful girl who'd been at his side and, despite the repeated dangers refusing to move since he was eleven, he didn't expect she would change now but as his eyes drifted to their daughter Harry had felt he needed to try.

-oOoOo-

Cedric was beginning to regret choosing the three broomsticks over Madam Puddifoot as he couldn't get any time to be alone with Cho for students constantly interrupting, demanding details of the Potter Institute, he eventually relented and they found themselves surrounded by about twenty students.

"Ok I didn't want to say anything because you lot have to go back to Hogwarts but the Institute beats the castle in everyway imaginable. Accommodation, climate, professors and courses are all far superior to what Hogwarts provides, their library is building up to be one of the best in Europe and meanwhile I get use of their personal one at Potter Manor."

"But they don't have any Quidditch or even houses," moaned Ron

"There's a group that does intense training every morning and then some of them fly, this morning the three girls, Roger and I challenged them to a friendly pick-up game and got slaughtered. Ginny Pomfrey was Seeker, Harry, Hermione and Luna Lovegood were the Chasers with Neville Longbottom as keeper and they were awesome. Harry and Hermione are the best two fliers I've ever seen and I include Krum in that."

Ron was about to explode at the ludicrous comparison of Granger with his hero when he felt Millie's hand tighten on his arm as she spoke, "we saw the two of them in action at Sirius Black's trial, they saved minister Bones before stunning all those death eaters and finishing off with an auror for good measure. When Harry stuck that thing in the death eater's mouth to blow the back of his head off I'd never seen anything like it." Millie was almost whispering by the time she was finished and the pressure on Ron's arm told him they would be leaving soon, he just hoped they didn't get caught.

"What about the Tri-wizard Tournament? You're going to miss it," Marietta said.

"There's no way I would ever have entered that competition unless someone cast the same spells on me that Woods was under. 'Eternal

Glory?' Can anyone here name me a previous winner?" the very loud silence answered his question, "When was the last time the Cannon's won the league?"

Ron's shout of "1892" as Millie dragged him out the door had everyone laughing.

"Now that's eternal glory," joked Cedric before becoming serious again, "a thousand galleons is a lot of money but you have to compare that against the impact being chosen would have on your NEWT's, the Tri-wiz will soon be forgotten but those scores are with you for the rest of your life and let's not forget to mention the 'extremely dangerous' part."

Marietta came back at him, "what about the honour of Hogwarts?"

Cedric just stared at her until she was blushing, "everyone knows you tried everything to get out of Hogwarts but the Institute wouldn't accept you, do I really have to answer the 'honour' bit? I actually hadn't realised just how bad things had become until I set foot in the Institute, the atmosphere there just lifts your spirits and makes you want to do your best."

He could see the confused looks so tried his best to explain by giving an example, "the Institute currently has all the kids from an orphanage staying there while the Potter's prepare a new building for them, yesterday I sat having lunch with two nine-year-old orphans who worship Harry and Hermione and not because of that boy-who-lived bullshit. It isn't even anything to do with the fact that their clothes, meals and even the roof over their heads were all provided by them. It was purely down to the fact that they had spent time with the kids and were even teaching them to fly a broom, I thought at first it was hope that these kids now had before realizing that it was even stronger than that. Harry and Hermione, just by being who they are quite literally install belief that things will get better and every single person in the Institute responds to that. It really is quite difficult to explain other than they are now the leaders Dumbledore only thinks he is."

The mutterings from these revelations would continue for days as Cedric's words sank in, almost all seventh year students already agreed with him over the NEWT's issue and it really would be interesting to see who the Hogwarts champion would be.

Cedric finally broke away from the group and with Cho on his arm slipped up a side alley for some alone time, unfortunately for the young couple they choose the same alley that Mille had dragged Ron up earlier. Cedric had other things on his mind and was on top of the situation before realizing it, he moved in front of Cho to protect her but his ears were soon ringing from the pretty Ravenclaw's screams.

-oOoOo-

Wormtail had dogged the Weasley boy's steps all day but the large Slytherin seemed to be attached to him, when they had entered the alley he thought Christmas had come early only to turn the corner and find the large Slytherin was now actually attached to the boy. That sight would haunt Peter Pettigrew for the rest of his life, he hid while waiting on the couple finishing their business and almost offered thanks to Sirius for the fact he no longer slept in the boy's bedroom.

When the horrible noises had died down Peter swung round the corner and fired off two stunners, as both his targets fell to the ground the death eater found himself staring at Cedric Diggory and Cho Chang. He immediately fired a cutting curse, which hit the boy's chest and started his girlfriend screaming like a banshee, Peter panicked and fired off another three curses at the couple but they disappeared before his spells could even reach them. This seemed like the proverbial good idea to the not so bright death eater so he activated his portkey taking the unconscious couple with him as he headed back to his master.

-oOoOo-

Cho's screams had the whole Institute rushing to see what the commotion was; Cedric's injury had activated his portkey, which had brought both of them back to Italy.

Harry just stood and stared at Cedric as Poppy worked feverishly to prevent the boy bleeding to death, Cho had passed out and the staff were clearing everyone else away from the area. Hermione and Joan had their arms around Harry who couldn't believe this was happening, Cedric was out the tournament and supposed to be safe so what the bloody hell went wrong?

"I think he's going to be ok now but that portkey saved his life, even ten minutes later and I wouldn't have been able to help him," Poppy had managed to close the wound and administer blood replenishing potion to stabilise his condition. Cho was revived and found to be in shock so was given a mild sedative and placed in the bed next to Cedric's.

Harry felt he could breath again, seeing Cedric lying like that had caused a whole load of painful memories to surface but Hermione was helping through the bond and Joan just seemed to instinctively know her dad needed a hug. "When will we be able to ask one of them what happened?" Harry asked the healer.

Poppy considered the question for a moment before giving her answer, "it will probably be Cedric who wakes first, Miss Chang has had quite a scare and will have to be brought back to consciousness slowly, preferably with her boyfriend awake and well beforehand. If it's really urgent I could wake Cedric for a short while in about an hour?"

"Yes please Poppy," answered Harry "I have a really bad feeling about this and need to know quickly."

-oOoOo-

Ron was revived to find himself staring into the faces of Peter Pettigrew and Bellatrix Lestrange, a quick exclamation of "bloody hell!" and the red haired Gryffindor fainted back into unconsciousness.

"Oh heart of a lion this one, are you sure you got the right boy?" Bella taunted Peter "perhaps we should recommend using the girl, she at least is a Slytherin and has to have more pluck than him."

Peter could only shake his head as his complexion started to turn green, their master wouldn't be very pleased with this but perhaps he could keep the boy unconscious until it was time to perform the ceremony. The more he thought about it he realised the problem would be keeping him awake long enough to perform the ceremony.

-oOoOo-

Back at the castle Albus had Percy and Penelope run off their feet arranging tonight's ceremony while Horace was otherwise engaged, they didn't count their returning students and were unaware that Hogwarts was currently missing a member of Gryffindor, Slytherin and Ravenclaw.

-oOoOo-

Cedric Diggory woke slowly, seeing his bed surrounded by people brought everything rushing back, "Cho?"

She's fine Cedric, just got a bit of a shock and sleeping it off in the bed next to you. Can you tell us what happened?" Pomona asked.

"We walked round a corner to find a man stunning Ron Weasley and Millicent Bulstrode, I just had time to get in front of Cho before being hit by a curse. Apart from hearing Cho screaming the next thing I remember is waking up here."

Pomona had been his head of house for six years before joining the institute and Cedric had grown into a fine young wizard in her opinion, she could guess why they were going 'round a corner' but didn't want to embarrass Cedric.

"Do you think we could look at your memory in a pensieve to see if we can figure out who attacked you?" she asked.

"I can tell you exactly who attacked me, I recognised him straight away from his picture in the Quibbler. It was Peter Pettigrew and he really does look like a rat."

The irony that Pettigrew once again had attacked Cedric was not lost on Harry and Hermione, at least this time the former Hufflepuff had survived but it left them with the question why stun the other two. It hit both of them at the same time, "shit, we need a meeting NOW!" they could hear the panic in Harry's voice so everyone headed straight out of the infirmary and into an unused classroom while the missing members were summoned.

Pomona was there because she now knew the full story, Ginny was asked to attend as Ron was involved while they included Amber as she would have been the only one left out. Joan was sitting on Hermione's knee, refusing to leave her parents so they let her sit quietly as they discussed what to do next.

Harry started off, "we think Voldemort is going to use Ron to get himself a new body but when he finds that grave empty, who knows what he'll do."

The two marauders exchanged glances before Sirius spoke, "eh Harry, you never said you wanted that grave empty."

Harry's eyes bored into his godfather, "please tell me you took out his father's bones."

"Of course we did, Remus configured them into a walking stick which is currently in the umbrella stand at the Grangers."

"Why do I feel there's a 'but' coming here?" Harry asked.

"As I said you never mentioned that we had to leave the grave empty, we left a dead squirrel there transfigured to look like a human skeleton."

Harry's eyes never left his godfather as a myriad of emotions coursed through his body but eventually there could only be one winner, he burst into uncontrollable laughter, which was soon followed by Hermione while the rest played catch-up.

“Could someone please explain to me just what the hell is going on here?” asked a totally bemused Ginny.

It was Hermione who was first to get herself back under control, “Voldemort is going to attempt a ritual using a bone from his father, flesh from a servant and blood of an enemy. Peter will be the servant but he now has Ron as the enemy because he couldn’t get to Harry and a squirrel bone in place of his father’s which these two switched.” She just couldn’t resist the joke, “this will drive Voldemort nuts!”

“That still leaves us with the problem that there are two children who have been kidnapped by that monster.” Pomona’s point quickly put paid to the laughter in the room.

“I know we’ll eventually have to take him on but I’ll be honest here and say I’m not comfortable risking our lives to rescue the arsehole who wanted to harm my daughter,” Dan looked to Ginny who nodded that she could understand his position, she also knew if it was her that had been taken they would already be in armour and on their way to rescue her.

“I’m afraid that until we get that snake, me killing him would be a disaster. Our plan is still in place where we should be able to do this without injuries to our party; finishing off Voldemort and losing someone sitting here would not be a victory but a tragedy. If we go against him tonight he’s going to have a body of sorts with a raging temper that will see him attacking like a lunatic. The question we need to ask ourselves is can we sit here and allow those two to be murdered when we know exactly where they are.” Harry’s question had everyone searching their conscience.

It was Joan who broke the silence, “can’t the aurors go and get them if you tell them where they are?” the little girl was desperate for her parents not to be involved in this.

Hermione held her tight as she explained the problem, “you’ve seen what the aurors are like sweetie, Ron and Millicent would be killed for sure as well as some of the aurors. At the moment we’re the only people who can help.”

Luna was next to speak, "if Harry couldn't leave Malfoy to his fate then I don't think we can abandon these two, Millicent's only fault was getting betrothed to the arse."

Harry made the decision, "we make a rescue attempt but everyone needs to remember it's a rescue, we're not there to take casualties. We portkey in on the road at the cemetery and proceed very carefully, can we all live with that?"

There were nods around the room as they started moving to get ready, Harry and Hermione didn't want to be anywhere near Voldemort tonight but fate hadn't exactly been on their side so far. Joan clung to her aunt Ginny as her parents went to put their armour on. Harry asked his wife over their bond if he wasn't taking this saving people thing too far, her only answer was to kiss him.

-oOoOo-

Ron regained consciousness to find himself in a graveyard and being held by a stone figure, his vision was suddenly full of an angry Peter Pettigrew's face.

"Listen to me very carefully boy and you might live to see the sunrise," Peter knew there was no way the red head would make it through the night, his master would want to kill someone as soon as he got his new body and as far as the death eater was concerned better the boy than him.

"We are going to hold a ritual here and you will watch it all, to complete the ritual I have to take some of your blood. If you do what you're told I'll make a small cut on your arm, you embarrass me by passing out and I'll gut you like a fish. Do you understand me?"

Ron could only nod as he'd lost the power of speech. The trembling red head watched Peter go and move the largest cauldron he'd ever seen onto a fire, the ugliest baby he'd ever seen was then placed into the water filled cauldron as Ron prayed it couldn't swim. He soon found his voice again though as the ground in front of him started

churning up and a coffin emerged, the terrified Gryffindor could only look on in horror as Peter forced the lid open and removed a bone, which he then placed in the cauldron.

When the death eater pulled out the wicked knife Ron was struggling like mad to escape though with Bellatrix Lestrange standing next to him this was not perhaps the brightest thing to do. When Peter used the blade to slice off his own hand, which plopped into the cauldron, Ron totally lost it and began screaming blue murder.

Ron's body eventually reacted as he had to stop screaming to breath, by now a bleeding Peter was standing in front of him holding the blade he'd used to cut off his other hand. As the blade inched towards him Ron was again screaming his lungs out, as the blade cut into his flesh he pissed himself before passing out from either fear or lack of oxygen.

Bella watched as Wormtail dripped the boys blood into the cauldron hoping her master wouldn't inherit the boy's bravery, with the ritual complete there was a flash, lots of mist as the cauldron cracked in half. The pureblood couldn't believe the sight in front of her, now standing upright was the biggest red squirrel in the whole frigging world. When the creature started screeching at Wormtail in a voice so high she wondered if he'd lost his nuts, Bella was seriously freaked out.

She was so freaked out that she just caught a glimpse of the blow heading her way, Bella instinctively threw up her arm to protect her head but chose the wrong arm which left the witch missing teeth as she hit the deck, dead to the world.

-oOoOo-

Millie awoke in a graveyard and immediately looked for her betrothed, not finding him had the witch panicking and the bonds placed on her were no match for the large Slytherin in this condition. Discovering that her wand was gone she looked around for something that could be used as a weapon, settling on a fallen tree branch that she quickly snapped to a length that gave her a rudimentary club. The hiss

behind her had Millie spinning with a speed that belied her size, the club connected with the snake's head with a hit that would have had them on their feet at Yankee Stadium.

It might not have gained her a home run but one large snake bit the dust though Millie didn't hear the horcrux scream as those coming from her betrothed drowned it out. It was an extremely pissed Millicent Bulstrode who went looking for her betrothed, he belonged to her and anyone damaging her property was going to pay.

When Ron screamed again she knew that she was much closer, then Millie spied the red hair and made her way towards it. A commotion elsewhere had distracted the bitch who was guarding her Ronald and that was going to cost the witch dearly, Millie swung the club again but the bitch had started to move though the solid 'thunk' as it impacted with her jaw meant she wouldn't be moving again for a good while yet.

Using the club as a lever she soon had her wizard free and flung over her shoulder like a sack of spuds before noticing what the bitch had been watching, a six foot squirrel was using a wand to place the cruciatus curse on a man who was covered in blood and beginning to foam at the mouth. Millie had no idea what type of perversion they had found themselves in the middle of and no intention of hanging around to find out, she hefted her burden and headed in the opposite direction from the creature with the wand, which was thankfully downhill.

-oOoOo-

The eight had made their way inside the cemetery gate and were slowly moving upwards when Millicent, with Ron dangling over her shoulder crested the hill, heading straight towards them.

Hermione was just thinking this was too easy when Riddle the squirrel hopped into the picture, he was screaming curses at the pair in a voice that would immediately have gotten him a starring role alongside Chip & Dale. The grotesque sight of a snarling squirrel froze them as much as the fact it was talking and throwing curses at the running figures though it was Emma who reacted first. She knew

it was extreme range for her pump action but every pellet that hit would sting like a bitch.

The creature squealed in pain as Emma pumped shot after shot in it's direction while Millie increased her pace now that help was at hand, the pureblood had only heard a sound like that once before and knew that Harry Potter had come to save his friend.

Harry and Hermione held hands before jointly casting Expelliarmus at the squirrel, which blew it twenty feet into the air, lodging it up a tree. Riddle's wand flew out his paw in their direction and Harry's seeker reflexes were once again evident as he plucked it out the air, the other team grabbed a now exhausted Millie and the ten portkeyed back to Italy, mission accomplished.

-oOoOo-

Albus had drawn out the tension as long as he dared and now approached the goblet for the first name while all eyes were on him and he was revelling from being in the spotlight once more, the parchment was spat out of the flames and glided into the old wizards hand.

He read the parchment before making the announcement, "the champion for Durmstrang is Victor Krum!"

Loud cheering rang through the great hall for the first time this term as Albus waited on the next name.

"The Beauxbatons champion is Fleur Delacour!" More cheers followed though everyone was now waiting on the Hogwarts champion.

When the next piece of parchment came out Albus was livid, how could the selfish bastards put their NEWT scores before HIS honour. Didn't they care this would reflect badly on him? He almost didn't want to read the name but with so many compulsions on the goblet he couldn't do a thing about it. "The Hogwarts champion is Barnabas Bole."

Dumbledore was sure there was laughter mixed in with cheering at the Slytherin beaters name, maybe he could change the rules and allow him to use a beaters bat instead of his wand, he would be a damned sight better with it. Albus knew the next bit would stop the laughter though he would have to remember to look surprised, especially with that bitch Bones here.

You could have heard a pin drop as the fourth piece of parchment was spat out the goblet, when the headmaster announced "Harry Potter" the resulting noise was cut short by Amelia who was now on her feet.

"How is that possible?" she demanded, "the Institute didn't enter the competition and I know for a fact Lord Potter is in Italy and has been since the goblet was lit."

It took all Dumbledore's experience to keep the smirk off his face, "it doesn't matter minister, his name came out the goblet therefore he must compete or lose his magic."

Amelia glared at the ministry officials in charge of the tournament who just sat with their heads down, confirming her fears.

Smirking was the last thing on Dumbledore's mind as the goblet spat out another name, he didn't have to fake surprise or shock this time. He couldn't believe it as he read the name, how could that happen without him knowing?

"Lady Hermione Jean Potter."

Amelia was incensed, "just what are you trying to pull here Dumbledore?"

For once Albus could answer with total honesty, a very rare occurrence these days. "Madam minister I can assure you I didn't even know they were married." How was he supposed to get the arse to sacrifice himself, never mind his hands on the Potter fortune now?

Everything stopped as another name came out the goblet and Albus realized just how much he'd been played, the old even recognised the handwriting from monitoring the boy's mail. This would even satisfy the terms of the prophecy as it was clearly by his hand but with a horcrux in his head Potter was already dead.

"Tom Marvolo Riddle" brought the house down until the main doors crashing open once more introduced silence to the hall.

-oOoOo-

They arrived at the Institute to what Millicent would consider chaos, professor Sprout was snogging professor Lupin, Lord Black had a young woman all over him while Ginny and a young girl she didn't know were dashing about hugging and kissing everyone. Madam Pomfrey led her, still carrying Ronald into what was obviously their infirmary and Ginny came in behind them. Ron was still unconscious but Poppy wasn't worried and quickly healed the cut on his arm. A scourgify charm on Ron would have to do for now but she asked Ginny to take Millicent and let her have a shower, Millie followed the girl who would have been her future sister-in-law into their apartment as Ginny pointed to the bathroom while looking out some clothes she could transfigure to fit.

Millie was still carrying the club and left it leaning on the wall outside the shower room where Ginny noticed the blood on the end of it.

The water was running as Ginny asked, "just who did you hit with the stick?"

Millie answered, "I hit that bitch Lestrangle right on the mouth, oh and the bloody biggest snake I've ever seen."

The last words were hardly out her mouth when the shower door slid back and an astonished Ginny was standing there, "did you say snake? Do you think you killed it?"

"Oh it was definitely dead, crushed it's skull," answered the unabashed girl who couldn't understand why Ginny was bobbing up

and down with excitement, one red head in her life was definitely enough.

“I need to go and get Harry right away, this is just the best news.”

“Em Ginny, would you mind if I finished my shower first?” the bright red colour that the girl turned cleared up any misunderstandings.

“Oh I’m so sorry Millicent, I just forgot everything when I heard you hit the snake. I’ll make sure you get time to finish your shower but this is great news.” She rushed away leaving Millie wondering just what was so special about the beast.

Millie came out the shower and put on the clothes Ginny had transfigured for her, she would have to ask where the girl did her shopping because these were better than anything she owned.

Ginny led her into a room that held the people who rescued her along with a couple of others, her eyes were immediately drawn to the beautiful little girl who seemed to have calmed down some but was clinging to Hermione.

It was a delighted Harry that spoke first, “Millicent, you have done us a great favour tonight and I could kiss you for it but after hearing what you did to Bellatrix Lestrange I’m terrified to attempt it.”

The large Slytherin just laughed, “you’re most welcome Lord Potter, I’m just so glad you showed up to rescue your friend.”

The silence that followed that remark actually unnerved the girl until Harry tried to explain, “Millicent had Ron been there alone tonight I don’t know if we would have left this building, the Weasley family had plans for me and Ron was part of it. He was going to use a love potion on my wife here, not because he has any feelings for her but just purely to take her away from me. I was supposed to marry another according to the manipulations of the Weasleys and Dumbledore.”

Ginny actually had to help the girl to a seat before she fell down, “my family and the headmaster wanted me with Harry so they could control him and steal even more of his gold. When that plan didn’t work they sold me but Harry and Hermione tricked them and I ended up being adopted and am now Ginny Heather Pomfrey.”

Hermione walked over with Joan in her arms, “Millicent it was always Harry for me, never at any time did I consider Ron as anything more than a friend. We fought all the time and couldn’t agree on anything, I know this must be a shock to you but considering this is the boy you want to spend the rest of your life with then it really is something you need to talk about with him.”

Millie took a few deep breaths before speaking, her revulsion there for all to see. “Lord and Lady Potter please believe me when I say how much that I abhor those potions, I have had to put up with people saying that I made use of them to get Ron to be my betrothed. The only excuse I can offer is that he’s not the sharpest tool in the box and easily led, he would have done whatever his mother told him to do without question. On behalf of both of us I would like to offer my sincerest apologies.”

“You have nothing to apologise for Millicent, we owe you a great debt for tonight and anything we can do for you only requires a request.”

“Lord Potter if I could find out where these clothes were bought that would be reward enough.”

“The name is Harry and I think we can do better than that, we’ll make arrangements for these four young ladies to take you shopping in Naples and I’ll pick up the tab.”

Millicent was about to protest that she didn’t want to inconvenience anyone when Ginny and Luna pounced on Harry with hugs and kisses, the little girl also looked very excited but her words shocked the witch.

“Mum can I really come to?”

Hermione held her daughter tighter, “of course you can sweetie, and you were a very brave girl tonight.” She caught the look of confusion on the Slytherin’s face, “sorry Millicent, this lovely young lady is our daughter Joan.”

Joan, having been introduced to the newcomer was now off and running, “oh I’m so happy you’ll get to come shopping with us, aunt Ginny and aunt Luna just love it but you wouldn’t believe the time they take to pick some underwear, the only thing that gets them out of that shop is the promise of pizza and coke.” The accompanying laughter had the two girls blushing and aiming pretend scowls at the person revealing their secrets.

Millie couldn’t help but smile at the delightful child who had managed to say all that in just one breath, “thank you Harry and I would be delighted to go shopping with Joan.” The little girl’s eyes lit up at the compliment and Millie knew she’d made a friend.

“Ok we’ll get some dates sorted soon but could you tell us what happened today, don’t miss anything out.”

Millie didn’t take Harry’s words literally as she had no intention of explaining what she and Ron were doing up that alley but recounted every detail from when she woke up in the graveyard.

The broad smiles when she described the fate of the snake still confused her and the explanation that it was Voldemort’s familiar felt like a half-truth. She was amazed by the dynamic of the group though, which consisted of the headmistress, professors, muggle parents, students and a child, with a couple of lords and a lady thrown in for good measure yet there was no posturing for position evident at all. The only brinkmanship on display was good-natured and seemed to switch targets haphazardly, the thought that her betrothed was part of this and threw it away chasing gold he had no right to ignited Millie’s anger.

She would give anything to be part of a group like this, not for fame or finance but because friends were worth much more than those trinkets. Neither fame or finance had saved them tonight, these

people who her betrothed had betrayed in the worst way possible still risked their lives to come to their rescue and that was worth way more than gold. The fact that Ron didn't understand that meant she was going to have to do some re-educating of her own, perhaps she would hold on to that stick for now.

Millie was sitting in clothes that made her feel more like a girl than at anytime in her life while the conversation around her jumped from subject to subject but always seemed laced with laughter, this must be what it's like to be normal she thought.

She now understood what Cedric was trying to tell them in the Three Broomsticks today, Millie hadn't been here three hours and already had been treated better than in her three years at Hogwarts.

Had Ron actually used that potion against someone she would be kicking his arse out of bed and telling the prat to get lost, even though she loved him dearly that would have been an unforgivable act in her eyes. Millie was about to have a long and serious conversation with Ronald that was going to determine their future together, she excused herself and headed off to the infirmary to confront the love of her life.

-oOoOo-

Bella came round in great pain with a large squirrel's face filling her vision, as the creature touched her cheek she screamed at the top of her lungs, "get your paws off me you frigging freak!"

The only thing that saved her life was that with her jaw broke and multiple teeth missing she could have been singing 'Rule Britannia' and not a word would have been understood. Between her gurgles and Voldemort's helium vocals they sounded more like a comedy duo than a dark lord and his evil sidekick, 'Riddle the squirrel and the one-armed toothless witch' had a catchy ring to it that should wow the punters on the cabaret circuit.

Bella's ear was beginning to be able to decipher the creatures ramblings, enough to understand that the group she'd met in the Black family home had turned up and 'luckily' defeated the bushy

tailed rodent, she could see lumps all over it's body that looked as if multiple stinging hexes had hit.

She was in a lot of pain but couldn't help wondering how Bellatrix Black, the queen of pureblood supremacy, came to be lying spitting teeth in a bone yard with a couple of rodents for company. When she caught sight of Peter she had to change that assessment, Wormtail had met his death at the wand of a squirrel. Bella knew she was loosing it and needed to get away from this thing that was still spouting about purebloods kneeling before him, he had a frigging snout and tail for Merlin's sake.

She noticed he was using Peter's wand to try and repair her jaw meaning he'd been disarmed; she was surprised they hadn't finished the job and was sure next time there would be no escape. The creature laid it's paw on her arm and before her revulsion had a chance to register he aparated them both out of there.

-oOoOo-

Harry had Sirius in a one-arm hug, "the marauders rode again tonight with their greatest ever prank, Prongs and Regulus got some revenge when you gave Riddle that bushy tail. You have totally destroyed his credibility with the British purebloods forever and Peter died like the rat he was; if our plan has worked Voldemort will be losing his magic in the next few weeks to boot. I think a little visit to uncle Albus is in order tonight, they must have the search parties out by now."

"Do you think they'll have noticed that three students are missing?" Neville asked jokingly.

Harry wasn't joking with his answer, "they better have, Amelia's there tonight and she'll tear Albus a new one if he hasn't."

They decided to go mob handed with even Joan tagging along.

A/N Please review and many thanks to those who already have.

Chapter 25

Pomona led her 'delegation' into the great hall with every set of eyes in the place focused on the group, they were all wearing Italian designed dress robes and the Institute headmistress felt like a bride as she walked down the hall with her husband at her side.

The three Potters were next with mum and dad behind them; Neville, Luna and Ginny then had Sirius and Amber completing the procession. Amber had heard tales her whole life about Hogwarts but after her time at the Institute was singularly underwhelmed, she wasn't sure if they had went for dank and depressing as part of their Halloween celebrations but her gut feeling told her this was the norm. The Institute members added a splash of much needed colour to the festivities with only the Beauxbatons students not dressed in black, Dumbledore of course was ridiculously colourful and she half thought if this was why he kept everyone else in black.

The older Hogwarts students couldn't believe their eyes that this was professor Sprout, their former head of Hufflepuff, and strolling arm in arm with professor Lupin. When their gaze travelled along the former pupils 'disbelief' was the only word to describe the changes on display.

Pomona approached Albus and Amelia before speaking, "Good evening Minister, Headmaster, we just popped by to let you know that the search parties can be brought back, your missing students are safe and sound at the institute and being cared for after their ordeal today."

It was like watching an equilibrium experiment using real people, the colour drained out of Albus while seemed to flow into Amelia, as she was almost purple with rage.

"You mean to say we sat there enjoying a feast and listening to you prattle on all night while Hogwarts had students missing and you did nothing!" if anything the experiment moved even further in Amelia's direction as Dumbledore was now ashen while the minister exploded as the realisation hit that the old fool didn't even know.

“Just what kind of school are you running here headmaster? Students missing and you don’t even know? The goblet spewing forth names of people who haven’t been near the castle – you have a lot to answer for and you better start talking now.”

Albus spun round to face the staff table and professor Vector stood up, “all Hufflepuff students present and accounted for.”

When she sat back down it was Percy who stood up next and he looked pissed off, “headmaster, you allocated specific tasks to professor Clearwater and myself which meant we were unable to monitor returning students. We both assumed that you would take care of the situation since you ensured we were otherwise engaged.”

Slughorn didn’t even bother standing up, “I was busy dealing with a pupil all afternoon headmaster.”

Amelia heard the growls coming from the Potters at that remark but decided to deal with Dumbledore first, “there’s no point trying to blame the staff you appointed, as headmaster the duty of care for the students of Hogwarts falls to you. When do you think it would have become apparent that there were students missing?”

She wasn’t expecting an answer and turned to Pomona for more information, “could you tell me please headmistress just who is missing and how they came to end up at the Potter Institute?”

“There was a death eater attack in Hogsmead today,” Pomona now had the undivided attention of everyone in the hall, “Peter Pettigrew stunned Ronald Weasley and Millicent Bulstrode before being disturbed by Cedric Diggory and Cho Chang. Cedric was hit by a cutting curse but his life was saved by the emergency portkey that all Institute students are issued with when they leave the Château, the portkey triggered as soon as he was injured and transported both him and a shocked Miss Chang to Italy.” Pomona didn’t think it was possible for Amelia to get any angrier but she was being proved wrong and wondered how the minister would cope with the next instalment of the story.

“Miss Chang was in shock and it took over an hour for Cedric to be well enough to be woken and able to answer questions, this was when we discovered that Pettigrew had abducted the two students for his master. A team from the institute acted swiftly, rescuing both students from Voldemort’s clutches and they are at the moment enjoying the hospitality of our infirmary for precautionary measures only.”

Amelia didn’t need to ask who the team was or that she would be hearing a lot more of the details later but there was still more than enough information here to shred the old whiskered wanker. “Have you anything to say Albus?” he was stoic but Amelia wasn’t letting him off the hook, “I think at the very least headmistress Lupin and her staff deserve a thank you for the rescue and care of students you didn’t even know were missing.” The sarcasm dripped off her words while the old goat mumbled ‘thanks’ as if it was choking him to say the word.

Amelia now ignored him as she turned to Harry and Hermione, “Lord and Lady Potter, tonight both your names and Tom Marvolo Riddle came out of the goblet which means you will have to compete in the tournament or loose your magic, do you know anything about this?”

Harry’s answer was carefully worded so that no lies were told, “madam minister, our fight with Voldemort earlier tonight is the first time either my wife or I have been in Britain for at least a couple of weeks.”

Amelia had to ask the question and was aware of Harry’s evasion but again that was for later, “unfortunately I’m informed that you must compete as this constitutes a magically binding contract.”

Both Potter’s just nodded their acceptance as Albus seized his chance, “Harry we really need to talk and now that you’re moving back into the castle there are things that we really need to get sorted out...”

Harry cut him off, “Amelia this is a ministry sponsored event?” he asked, receiving her nod he ploughed on ignoring the desperate

attempts at interruptions by the old coot, “is it a condition of competing that you must reside in Hogwarts during the event?”

She looked towards her two officials who were in charge of the organisation, both shook their heads so Harry pushed home his point, “we will then compete but arrive shortly before the event is due to take place, is this within the rules?”

“Yes Lord Potter, that would be acceptable.”

Albus almost had a coronary, “that hardly promotes the goodwill spirit that we are trying to generate here.”

Amelia looked at him like a bug that needed stepped on, “do you call names coming out of the goblet that weren’t put there by the people concerned goodwill? Perhaps if you put a bit more spirit into being a headmaster then you might actually know when some of your students have been attacked and are missing without having to rely on people from another school to do your job for you.”

Representatives from both Drumstrang and Beauxbatons were on their feet, “madam minister, we would also like to request the same conditions be applied to us,” the look that both gave Dumbledore could have stripped paint, “conditions here at Hogwarts are not as we were led to believe.”

Harry came back into the discussion, “Amelia, could I make a couple of suggestions? Can we condense this tournament to have it finished by Christmas so it won’t adversely affect students studying for exams and also hold the first event very quickly to give a certain Tom Riddle less time to come up with an escape clause.”

Both representatives quickly agreed with this suggestion and though Albus strongly objected, no one was paying him any attention whatsoever which was the worse punishment possible for the incredibly vain wizard.

Harry’s next suggestion had Tonks and Connie moving quickly to comply before Amelia had even agreed, “I think we need to get that

goblet somewhere incredibly secure because should Riddle get his hands on it he could void the competition by its destruction."

Albus was blustering about the castle being the safest place but was again being ignored as they planned on taking it to Gringotts.

Amelia had a quick word with the two ministry officials before making an announcement, "the first test will take place on the eighth of November, second on the twenty second with the final on the thirteenth of December. Can we all agree on that?"

All parties involved except Dumbledore agreed and the dates were set.

Albus was watching as everything slipped through his fingers and his temper was barely contained as he tried once more to get Harry to listen, "Lord Potter we really must talk, there are important matters that cannot be ignored any longer so you must listen to me."

"You have nothing I want to hear old man but if you don't mind I have something to say," Harry turned to address the hall. "Students of Hogwarts, especially the boys third year and below do not drink any potion Slughorn gives you – especially his patented homesickness cure."

Amelia knew right away she wasn't going to like the answer to her question but it had to be asked, "could you please explain that statement Lord Potter?"

Harry seemed to be thinking of the best way to answer her question when of course he was having a mental conversation with his wife on the best way to deliver this devastating blow, "when Hagrid came to deliver my Hogwarts letter he asked me if I'd never wondered where my parents learned it all, well has no one wondered where Riddle learned it all? Last time I looked the Hogwarts library didn't contain 'an idiot's guide to becoming a dark lord' yet he was able to kill his remaining family and create the diary before leaving Hogwarts, considering he spent his life before turning eleven and summers thereafter as a muggle he could only have obtained that knowledge one place. How am I doing Sluggy?"

The potions professor sat as if petrified at the knowledge Potter was alluding to.

“Our Tom caught his head of house in a compromising position with a second year boy, Sluggo here is no great shakes with a wand but had developed a potion version of the obliviate curse to feed to his young victims. Tom wasn’t stupid enough to eat or drink anything that Sluggo had been anywhere near and blackmailed him for the rest of his years at Hogwarts.”

Harry had everyone in the hall hanging on his every word as he continued with his tale, “Forbidden knowledge, banned textbooks, illegal potions, and free run of the castle, basically anything he wanted because his head of house would be going to Azkaban for a very long time otherwise. This bastard is responsible for Tom not dying that night he cursed me as a baby, he’s responsible for the basilisk being released on the school in my second year and this bastard is the reason why we had to fight Voldemort again tonight.”

A curse whizzed by Harry’s ear but it was outgoing rather than incoming, the spell hit Slughorn directly in the face as Ginny’s famous Bat-boggie hex finally got him moving. He moved right into a fist though as Percy Weasley broke his nose and continued to pummel him even after the potions professor was on the ground. Penelope finally managed to get her fiancé pulled off Sluggo before the girl who’d been petrified along with Hermione started firing in solid kicks aimed at his groin.

Both aurors and the minister made no move to intervene, as they would be taking what was left of him back to the ministry. Amelia noticed a young puff throwing up while his friends tried to comfort him and guessed why ‘Sluggo’ wasn’t counting Slytherins today, she would leave the Clearwater girl a little longer before sending Connie and Tonks to arrest him.

The Institute party were rallying round to comfort Ginny except Harry and Hermione; they never took their eyes off Dumbledore. As minister for magic Amelia had to act and sent her aurors over to

arrest the pig since Penelope now looked exhausted but it was the Hogwarts board of governors that she addressed.

“Governors we have a hard decision to make here and I really only see two options as the status quo is now untenable, we either bring Hogwarts under ministry control or close it.”

Dumbledore couldn't help but notice his opinion wasn't even being sought and now realised the writing was on the wall, he was being sidelined and quickly becoming a nonentity. Potter's revelation about the diary and Voldemort's survival meant he was aware of horcruxes, Riddle's name entered in his own handwriting probably signified knowledge of the prophecy leaving Albus with no cards left to play. Potter on the other hand had Severus, Molly, Arthur, Oliver in St Mungo's and the information from the goblins to wheel out at any trial.

Albus was beginning to realise just how badly the master manipulator had been out manoeuvred, he himself now had two choices of either sinking quietly into ignominy or going out with a bang. Sitting quietly in a cell in Azkaban was just not a future Albus was prepared to accept so he was going to go out with a bang and take as many of these ungrateful bastards with him as he could.

All conversation stopped with Dumbledores next words and the old wizard was delighted to be the centre of attention once more, “Harry my boy I really must congratulate you on a job very well done but then again your little mudblood bitch always was an annoying know-it-all. I knew from the moment she was sorted into Gryffindor that another Potter would end up with a mudblood and even that stupid bastard Weasley couldn't keep you apart forever, I was hoping he was going to ruin her for you though.”

Harry just smiled at him, “why thank you Albus, you just won me five galleons.”

Albus was hoping to at least make the boy angry before provoking him into a fight but this totally confused him.

“You see my beautiful wife bet me that you were too stupid to work out we were manipulating you but I maintained that you would put it all together eventually, of course I stipulated that it would be way too late for you to do anything about it which is why I got the full five. I wasn’t worried though, you are so arrogant in your belief that no one but you can see the big picture that it was actually very easy to get you to do exactly what we wanted.”

Albus was raging inside, this cocky young bastard actually had the nerve to stand there and criticise him, Potter was going to pay dearly. “And just what was it that you wanted?”

Harry was keeping him talking as Ginny moved with Joan into the centre of their formation and Pomona kept Amber company in the middle of the other, Dumbledore was going for his big play here so his name would be forever in the history books but the Potters were having none of it.

They didn’t expect him to pull this tonight or Joan would never have been near Hogwarts, but not knowing that students were missing was inexcusable and the final straw for Amelia. If the old man wanted a fight they wouldn’t be holding back, not with their family here as there was just too great a risk one of them could get hurt.

“We knew that you would put so many charms on that goblet in an attempt to force me back to Hogwarts we would have no problems ensuring Riddle’s name came out as well. You are so predictable old man that we were at least two steps ahead of you at every turn.”

Amelia understood what was going down here but couldn’t see anyway to stop it, Albus was determined to have his moment and there’s no way the Institute crew was going to back down. She started quietly getting the students out of the firing line while the Potters got ready for the unavoidable fight.

Albus was reaching for his wand when the metallic click reverberated around the otherwise silent hall as everyone waited with baited breath for the fight of the century.

“Mum, please don’t kill him just now.”

“You’ll have to give me a good reason son because right now I want to cut him in half, just like that Malfoy arsehole. Even Voldemort couldn’t shield against my shotgun and this prick has harmed my family way more than those other two ever did.”

“He wants a grandstand finale mum, to show the world that he was better than Harry Potter, it will hurt his pride a lot more when I kick his arse in front of all these witnesses.”

“Are you that confident Harry?” Dumbledore was trying to install some doubt into his mind but again there was that smile.

“My beautiful muggle born wife could easily kick your arse old man, it’s your play so lets have it. Some of us have a school to run properly and don’t really have the time to waste standing here listening to an old has-been’s drivel.”

Albus moved like lightning as his wand fired his flaming whip curse straight into Potter’s group, it should cut most of them in half. For all Dumbledores speed Harry was quicker and, calling on his seeker reflexes for the second time that night, caught the flame whip with his bare hand.

Albus couldn’t believe what his eyes were telling him, not only had the brat caught his whip; his hand appeared undamaged which was impossible. He then felt the drain on his core as Harry held hands with the mudblood before giving him the final piece of the puzzle.

“The power he knows not old man.”

He was terrified now as the drain on his core was substantial and he couldn’t break the spell, he reached into his robes for his other wand and drew it only to hear a loud boom as searing pain shot up his arm. Albus looked at his now ruined hand and had no more aces up his sleeve.

The group of six were glowing, as all were in physical contact with Harry and Hermione while Dumbledore's magic was redistributed where it could be used for the light side. The spell ended when Albus had no more magic left in his body and Harry silently summoned his now useless wand and snapped it right in front of Dumbledores crooked nose, a blur that was Joan Potter flew past them and swiftly kicked Albus as hard as she could on the ankle. The noise of the bone breaking was louder than that of his wand being snapped as the old man fell full length on the great hall floor like a tree being chopped down.

"You're a bad wizard and I'm glad my daddy kicked your arse."

Hermione clutched her daughter to her, "Joan, what have we told you?"

"Sorry mum," a chastised Joan turned back to Dumbledore, "I'm not allowed to say arse but your still a bad wizard and I'm glad my daddy kicked your butt!"

Hermione kissed the top of the young girl's head, "that's much better sweetie."

Amelia Bones well remembered Harry just absorbing her stunner but this was something else entirely as she watched him hold onto that curse before the explanation for Snape's condition hit her like the knight bus, they were drawing off the old bastards magic and Dan Granger's pistol just ensured that using a second wand was no longer an option.

The man now lying on the floor of the great hall bore only a passing resemblance to the Albus Dumbledore that adorned the chocolate frog cards; his face was pale and haggard as his appearance now matched that of someone of his great age. Amelia was sure he wouldn't see Christmas and had a decision to make, did their world really need the spectacle of a trial for this wizard or could the healing start quicker and better without one.

He would never see Azkaban, as the old man probably wouldn't survive a weekend in that resort, she reckoned that his last days were going to be spent in a secure ward at St Mungo's. She would have to consult with the Potters about what would be best for Magical Britain.

Harry approached her, "Amelia, there's another wand that needs snapped tonight." He pulled out Riddle's wand, "we took this of the self styled Lord Voldemort earlier tonight and he wasn't looking too good since mum blasted him with her shotgun and my wife and I disarmed him before he turned tail and scampered." The gasps could be heard throughout the hall as Harry snapped the hated wand that had killed both his parents.

He walked over to the contestants and noticed the Hogwarts entry was the Slytherin beater who had hit Alicia with his bat, claiming he thought she was the bludger; Harry hoped the dragon roasted his arse off.

"My wife and I are being forced to take part in this competition but we have no intention of taking it seriously, the winner will come from one of you three and we want to wish you luck."

Victor was desperate to say something to this arrogant boy who had upstaged the whole competition then had the audacity to claim they wouldn't really be trying to win, only the fact that he'd just performed a feat that Victor had witnessed and still didn't believe kept the Bulgarians mouth shut. He just gave a curt nod that Potter could interpret any way he wished.

Fleur had heard about Harry Potter from her little sister who had a crush on him but he was supposed to be fourteen! The Lord Potter before her looked older than that and his wife on his arm looked every bit as powerful as him, being part-veela she could see the enormously strong bond between these two and knew her sisters dream would remain just that.

Bole couldn't help showing he was an arse, whether he was affected by the vela charm and trying to impress or just an arse wasn't certain, "afraid of a little competition Potter?"

“What I’m afraid of Bole is that you aren’t even a little competition, skilful champions have died in the past so what chance does that give you of just surviving, never mind winning. When you can’t tell the difference between a beautiful broom riding girl who’s wearing bright red robes and a bludger I really fear for your life.”

Bole didn’t know if he was being insulted, challenged or complimented so just came up with one of his stock answers for situations beyond his understanding before walking away, “well you would say that.”

Hermione spoke to the other two champions, “please don’t judge Hogwarts by that example, the headmaster had alienated a lot of students and only the dregs seemed to have entered. As bad as Bole is with a beater’s bat he’s actually worse with a wand in his hand.”

The two Potters suddenly found themselves interrupted and almost surrounded by the Hogwarts board of governors, “Lord and Lady Potter, we would like to invite you and your school to return to Hogwarts. Dumbledore is gone and we think Pomona Sprout would make an excellent headmistress.”

The icy glares from the Potters made the entire board take a few steps back but the chill contained in Harry’s voice had them taking at least another one, “I thank you for the invitation but have no intention of returning to Hogwarts, Pomona LUPIN is an excellent headmistress but of the Potter Institute and under contract to us. This contract has some severe penalty clauses so she will be going nowhere without our consent which will not be forthcoming.”

He quickly glanced at the Lupins to see them both trying to stifle their laughter.

“My whole family has applied for Italian citizenship and plan to live and work there permanently. The purebloods of Britain have never hid the fact that they don’t want magic users of mixed blood or race in their country, well I intend to grant them their wish by offering an alternative to Hogwarts in a country that has welcomed us with open arms. I am sorry if this doesn’t quite fit in with your plans but I refuse

to raise children in a country that thinks of their mother as a mudblood and allows twelve-year-old girls to be sold to the highest bidder. Until Britain deals with its bigotry problem and brings itself out of the dark ages then the Potters will live abroad. As to your choices had Fudge still been minister I would have advised closure but Amelia Bones is an honourable lady who will always give of her best, with her in charge you have a chance.”

These revelations were perhaps one too many for some of the people in the hall, a few of the smarter students had quickly worked out what that would leave them with while the board of governors faced being stripped of their power and influence if Hogwarts came under direct ministerial control. The crowd was starting to get ugly when Amelia spoke, “Lord Potter I would like to thank you for ensuring that two criminals were brought to justice tonight and for destroying Lord Voldemort’s wand, I know we can count on you to finish the job.”

The sheep stopped their bleating with the realization that they still needed this upstart.

“ On behalf of the ministry I would like to put forward a recommendation for ‘Order of Merlin’s’ for you and your group.”

“Madam minister, while flattered I feel I must refuse though I would like to put forward a Hogwarts student for one, she is a pureblood Slytherin who took on Voldemort, Lestrage and Pettigrew without a wand and managed to free her betrothed, if you would like to return to the Institute we can go over the details there.”

Amelia just smiled, Harry knew there was no way she wasn’t going with them tonight to hear their story and he had just provided her with the perfect opportunity while poking in the eye any suggestions that he himself was bigoted by recommending a Slytherin for their world’s top award.

“Professor Vector, please assume charge of the school until we return on Monday with some solutions, can I assume that the other schools will be returning home?”

Both answered that they would be leaving in the morning and Amelia had Tonks take the slug to a cell while Connie took the old goat to St Mungo's, she was going to take the goblet to Gringotts herself and then the three would meet there before heading to the institute. This should be quite a tale Amelia thought though she had no idea just how big a tail it was.

The Institute crew used Harry's portkey to take them home and were all glad tomorrow was Saturday, facing Voldemort and Dumbledore in the one day was an excessive Halloween, even for Harry.

-oOoOo-

Millie sat beside Ron's bed waiting on him awakening from his terror induced slumber, she was doing something that she hadn't done before and wasn't happy with the way her thoughts were going. She was analysing their relationship by comparing it to those she had seen tonight and it didn't exactly measure up. The large Slytherin had watched the Grangers, Lupins and the Potters as well as Neville and Luna and Lord Black with his girlfriend. In every case both partners were attentive to each other with glances and casual touches whereas Ron had never even held her hand unless she grabbed his, no hugs or kisses were ever initiated by the red head leaving Millie to wonder just what their relationship was.

Millie was well aware she was no beauty and didn't expect her betrothed to profess undying love but she didn't think she could continue a relationship where there wasn't ever affection coming from the other partner, even a dog expected a pat on the head once in a while.

Ron awoke with a start and shot right up in bed before Millie managed to grab him by the shoulder, "Ron it's ok, we're safe." She could see the confusion in his eyes so tried to reassure him. "Harry and Hermione rescued us and we're in the Potter Institute."

The change in her betrothed's demeanour was astonishing, "Potter! We didn't need rescuing by him, I had it under control but as usual he has to play the hero and claim all the credit again."

This was a side of Ron she'd not seen before and definitely didn't like, she managed to calm him down before asking a question she swore she would never ask, "Ron I don't expect you to love me but do you even like me?"

No answer.

"Am I an embarrassment to you?"

Again Ron had no answer.

"When that Gryffindor girl made a play for you why didn't you tell her you were betrothed?"

Millicent sat there with tears running down her cheeks as Ron's mouth opened and closed like a goldfishes without a sound being emitted, when the Potters entered with Neville, Luna and Ginny he finally had an outlet for his temper.

"Potter, playing the great hero again I see, gloating over your gold as well by bringing us here to show off."

Joan had ran over and jumped on her 'aunty Millicent's' knee and hugged the crying girl, Millie soon had her large arms wrapped around the small girl and drawing comfort from the fact that at least someone wanted to hug her.

Harry was still coming down from his fight with Dumbledore and in no mood to take shit from anyone, especially this prick. "Just what is your problem Weasley? We go against Voldemort to save your sorry arse and you have the audacity to shout abuse at us! Add to that the girl who got you out of there is sitting here crying, you seem to be determined to take being a dickhead to a whole new level. This building sits on a large cliff and I have people begging me for the opportunity to throw you off it and you're beginning to convince me they've got the right idea."

Hermione knelt beside Millicent, "we have to return to Hogwarts next week, you're welcome to stay here till then and get your head

together. I know how much Ron used to infuriate me and you look as if a break would do you good.”

“What about me?” came from the ginger whinger.

Hermione actually snarled at him, “what you have yet to realise Ronald is that not everything on this planet revolves around you. Ginny told us that while she was going to be sold your only concern was for a bigger room than you had at the burrow, what kind of a selfish human being are you? There’s no way you can stay here as my parents would kill you, mum’s already put a bullet in Molly, killed Lucius Malfoy and shot Voldemort while dad’s only managed one death eater so far though he did blow off Bellatrix Lestrange’s arm and Dumbledore’s hand.”

Hermione looked ready to attack Ron and there wasn’t one person in the room now who would lift a finger to save him, fortunately Joan interrupted.

“Mum, can aunt Millicent stay with me? Tomorrow’s Saturday, we could all go shopping.”

“That’s a great idea sweetheart, Millicent the minister is coming here shortly could you put your memory of tonight into a pensieve for her to watch? Joan could then take you to her room then aunt Millicent wouldn’t have to watch it again.”

Millie was about to protest about putting them to a lot of trouble when Dobby appeared with a small table and a pensieve, “We have already put another bed in Miss Joan’s room and Winky has laid out night clothes for aunt Millicent”

“Dobby, you and Winky are the best,” gushed Joan, which caused the little chap to actually blush.

Millie finally got the message that Hermione was trying to convey, she didn’t want Joan to see the memory and this way the little girl would think she was helping her new aunt. She placed her memory in the

pensive and left as Joan took her hand, Millie didn't even acknowledge Ron's presence.

The prat was seething but before he could begin a rant about how unfair life was to him Amelia, Tonks and Connie arrived.

“Ladies, we've all had one hell of a night but there's something I want you and the prick lying here to see before we go somewhere else and answer your questions.”

They started the memory playing and the horcrux being destroyed put the first smile of the night on Amelia's face, though she did chuckle when Bellatrix tried to shield herself with her missing arm and ended up eating tree branch. The six-foot squirrel confused her for a moment until the sharp ex-auror noticed the wand he was using and almost passed out.

That Peter Pettigrew was dead was beyond doubt, his brain was fried and the amount of blood lost would end his life within minutes.

Millie had nearly managed to sneak away with her burden when the bushy tailed one noticed her and spells started raining down all around them as the hunt was now on, the deadly game of hide and seek that followed raised everyone's opinion of Millicent Bulstrode. They could all see the poor girl was almost exhausted from lugging Weasley when the boom of Emma's shot gun gave her fresh hope, she immediately ran straight towards the group. The Potters blasting the squirrel and catching his wand was the last action before they portkeyed out of there.

“Lord Potter, I totally agree with you. That girl deserves the Order of Merlin and if I have anything to do with it, First Class.” Amelia had been astonished at the young girl's courage; anyone who could put down that Lestrangle bitch definitely deserved a medal.

Ron's war cry of, “what about me?” was met with a mixture of distain, disbelief and disgust though Ginny looked ready to rip his throat out.

“Let’s see Ronald, your contribution to tonight was to scream your head off, wet yourself then cover your betrothed in blood, snot and piss while she hauled your unconscious arse out of there. Not satisfied with that you then upset her and she leaves here crying, personally I think you’re an ungrateful bastard who should be hung from the ceiling by your balls but that’s only my opinion.”

Luna made a face that appeared as if she had swallowed a bug, “while I fully agree with your sentiments Gin, that was one image I didn’t need in my head. Ronald Weasley your greed and jealousy have cost you the two best friends you’ll ever have, a young sister and now a girl who actually loves you so much she risked her own life to save yours. Being that you are the most selfish person I have ever met if it was Millicent that needed rescuing I’m betting you would have been out that graveyard like a shot. She really is much too good for you.”

They all filed out though Harry hung back to speak to his former friend, “there’s an old saying Ron that people get what they deserve, I actually agree with Luna and think Millicent’s way too good for you. If she gives you a second chance my advice would be to grab it with both hands. Oh and my wife wasn’t joking about mum and dad, you’ll be leaving first thing in the morning for your own safety.”

Harry left the pensieve playing on a loop so Ron could watch it all night, he still reckoned Millie would be better trying to beat some sense into him with her stick but at least he tried.

-oOoOo-

Millie was lying quietly crying when she felt a weight settle on the bed and a small hand offered her a hankie, “when I was in the orphanage it was normal for someone to be crying at night, sometimes the kid next to you would get picked to have a new life and while you tried to be happy for them you couldn’t help but wonder what was wrong with you that they didn’t want. You just have to keep believing that someone out there will love you and tomorrow could be the day when the magic happens and it all comes true.”

Millie dried her eyes as she listened to this extraordinary young girl.

“I kept believing and now I’ve got the best mum and dad in the whole world, every kid in the orphanage loves them but they picked me to be their daughter. When we go shopping tomorrow mum will spend as much time shopping for things to bring back for them as she will for us, she sits and reads to us all and we get so carried away the elves have to come and shoo us into lunch. You’re a friend now aunt Millicent and Potters always look after their friends, my mum and dad will help you – just you wait and see.”

Joan kissed her new aunt on the cheek before returning to her own bed as both witches fell asleep.

-oOoOo-

Amelia was full of questions but one now stood out from all the others, “was that squirrel really Voldemort?”

Harry explained how they had discovered the ritual and removed his muggle father’s bones as a precaution; he had to credit Sirius for the squirrel.

All Amelia’s years of experience were useless, she fell about laughing her arse off, Connie Hammer was the same while Tonks just gazed at her cousin in awe. Dobby had to bring refreshments before the two witches were calm enough to continue.

“Did you put your name in the goblet Harry?”

“No Amelia, we knew Dumbledore would charm the goblet to accept other schools and enter my name that way. We used this to enter Riddle as a student of St Brutus's Secure Centre for Incurably Criminal Boys. My relations told everyone that’s where I went so we thought it was poetic justice.”

Hermione continued, “This was our plan from the start, get him entered in the hope of stripping his magic though we never counted on Riddle having a new body. We just asked these two to empty the

grave, can you imagine the wizarding world's reaction if he turns up at the tournament?"

This started everyone laughing again before Amelia asked, "but how did Hermione's name come out of the goblet?"

Hermione at least had the decency to blush, "that was me, I told Harry I would be beside him for everything and that includes this tournament, Dumbledore had charms all around the goblet but none of them gave Dobby any trouble."

"Amelia I know this will double the expense of the tournament so we would like to make up the difference," Dobby popped in with the chequebook and informed them that Miss Joan was now fast asleep. "We would also like to offer some training for your 'younger' professors, while I stand by my position that the institute comes first I can see no harm in letting them observe and ask more experienced professors questions."

"Thank you Lord Potter and with the way things are at the moment I'll take you up on both of your generous offers."

-oOoOo-

Bella was actually wishing she was back in Azkaban, they had returned to the Riddle house because they had no-where else to go. Every time the creature swished its tail Bella wanted to fire a cutting curse at it, what a fine stole it would make.

She wasn't sure whether it was the pain relief potion that was making her light headed or the continual scurrying about of the thing she could no longer call master. When she and Peter had been on their food foraging missions they were also given the task of searching for information, what a revelation it was when they found that issue of the Quibbler.

Both had decided at once that whoever showed this to the Dark Lord would pay with their life so no mention of the fact that his father was a muggle would ever pass their lips.

At the moment Bella had a dreamless sleep potion passing her battered lips, not a good idea to mix it with the pain relief potion but then when your only companion was psycho squirrel who gives a shit!

Bella's last thought before succumbing to the bliss of unconsciousness was that it didn't matter any more, Riddle, Quirrell or squirrel, Harry Potter had kicked his arse up a tree every time they'd went head to head.

A/N Please review and a big thank you to those who already have.

Chapter 26

Millie was woken by Hermione, "Morning Millicent, quite a few of us start the day off with some training and we wondered if you wanted to join us. It will just be a light session today after the workout yesterday and we always feel better after it."

Millie had agreed before she caught sight of what Hermione was wearing, noticing where she was looking Hermione answered the unasked question, "don't worry, Winky will get you kitted out until we can get some shopping done today."

This was how Millicent Bulstrode found herself enjoying jogging along the beach in a crop top and shorts with her hair drawn back in a ponytail, she made quite the sight.

Emma Granger thought some parents should be shot; here was a young girl with an obvious self-esteem problem because of her size and features yet there was absolutely nothing wrong with her body.

She was about six feet tall with really broad muscular shoulders that tapered down to a slim waist, her arms and legs were again heavily muscled but her chest signified this person was all girl. The wizarding robes she wore fitted her at the shoulders then just hung straight down, giving the impression she was fat when nothing could be further from the truth.

Millicent obviously knew about hair removal but had never thought to trim her eyebrow into two distinct entities, instead of the one she had at the moment, her facial features were more chiselled than smooth but with some make-up it would really make a big difference.

She would never be a classic beauty but when she smiled or laughed her inner self shone through and with a body that any distance swimmer would be proud of Millicent was definitely no ogre.

Thanks to Millicent killing the snake they were able to suggest bringing the first task forward as they didn't need to go hunting for it, hopefully by next Saturday night it would all be over.

Harry was certain this was why Amelia was pushing for the Order of Merlin, First Class, as she didn't now need to have aurors carrying out the extremely dangerous task of combing the country searching for the beast.

He was sure Riddle would still be holed up in the old family place and their original plan if it wasn't killed beforehand called for a mass attack timed as he was losing his powers, this had worked out so much better. As it was only magic that was keeping the squirrel body alive, removing it should end Riddle's life without endangering anyone else.

Millie was really having a good time, the fact that these people were all doing this exercise to tone their bodies was a stunning revelation to the pureblood, she'd always considered herself a freak for having all these muscles yet here were women and girls who Millie considered to be beautiful working out to get them.

When they did some light work on the dummies she was amazed to see Hermione and Luna move like that and the power behind their attacks opened up a whole new world for the girl. Harry taught her a few moves and before long Dobby had to reinforce her dummy, when Millie timed it right the poor mannequin kept losing its head. Had she caught Bellatrix like she had intended last night there would have been one less death eater to worry about, she was easily stronger than Neville and probably rivalled Remus.

It was a very happy Millie who headed off to get her shower, she'd really enjoyed her morning so far and the girls were all excited about taking her on their shopping trip, allowing Millie to keep Ron at the back of her mind for now.

-oOoOo-

Ron hadn't slept much, watching the pensieve as Millie saved him again and again had become almost hypnotic. It was her face he couldn't take his eyes off, the expression when she let that bitch Lestranger have it turned immediately to one of concern as she tried to free him followed by devotion as she lifted him on to her shoulder and tried to get them out of there. She loved him so much yet all he

had bothered about was new robes and stupid possessions, letting the real treasure she offered him slip through his fingers because he was too frigging stupid to understand what she meant to him. Ron couldn't even eat the breakfast that had been provided as his whole body was in turmoil trying to work out how he could fix this.

Cho entered with her arm round Cedric and was gushing with enthusiasm, "oh Ron, such a pity you missed seeing round this place, it's fantastic. Harry's letting me come here next Hogsmead weekend so I can see Cedric, isn't that great? We hardly recognised Millicent this morning when she was training with the others, where had she been hiding that body? Cedric had to elbow Roger in the ribs to stop him drooling over her, these Hogwarts robes definitely aren't as flattering as the Institute's design."

Dobby popped into the room and announced, "Time to go back to Hogwarts."

Ron just froze, he wasn't sure whether it was that Davies was interested in Millie or the fact that he was not going to see her before leaving but his whole being was screaming at him not to let this happen.

"Dobby I can't go without speaking to Millie."

"Miss Millicent has left to go shopping with the other young ladies, it's time to go."

As Dobby reached for Ron the boy jumped back and was now pleading with the elf, "I need to speak to her Dobby, where's Harry?"

"Lord Potter is on the beach with some of the children, he doesn't like his time with them disturbed."

Ron was now crying, "please Dobby, just a minute of his time. This is very important to me."

Dobby popped out for a minute before returning with fresh instructions, "Miss Chang please come with me, you wait here."

Cedric gave his girlfriend a final kiss before she returned to Hogwarts with Dobby, he made no comment on the now distraught red head and left to catch up on some studying.

Dobby returned and Ron found himself transported to a beach where he was surrounded by kids, Harry and Neville flew over the waves and landed beside him as two laughing boys jumped off their brooms. Dobby re-appeared handing Ron a broom as Harry spoke to him, "you might as well make yourself useful, Joanne you're with him."

Another two kids had ran over to Harry and Neville as they flew them along the beach and out over the waves, the children's laughter could be heard over everything.

Joanne looked about five and quickly mounted side-saddle in front of Ron, they had no sooner taken off than the child's curiosity kicked in, otherwise known as the interrogation.

"Are you a friend of Harry's?"

"No, not really," he answered uncomfortably.

"Well are you Neville's friend then?"

"Not really," he was now actually squirming.

"Hermione's?"

"No."

"Luna's?"

"No."

"Ginny's"

The name was like a sledgehammer to Ron's heart as the tears were once again running down his cheeks, "No."

Joanne had that child's sixth sense where she knew there was more to the story and just stared at Ron, waiting on the next instalment.

Ron was like a moth to a flame and couldn't not give an answer to this child, "Ginny used to be my sister."

"What happened to your mum and dad?" Joanne asked, assuming he'd been orphaned.

"They're in jail for trying to swap Ginny for a house."

The look of revulsion on Joanne's face was another severe blow, how could this young orphan instinctively know this was wrong but he had actually gone along with it.

"Who do you live with now?"

"I lived with my betrothed but I haven't been treating her very well and she may be breaking up with me."

Joanne's next question was asked with that touch of exasperation that only a five-year-old can get away with, "do you have ANY friends?"

Ron couldn't answer other than to shake his head, tears streaming unashamedly down his cheeks at just how much of an arsehole he had become.

"I'll be your friend, if you want?" Ron looked mesmerised at Joanne who then went on to explain. "Miss Jillian always says that friends are our most treasured possessions and you can never have enough of them, didn't you know this?"

Ron could only shake his head in wonder at this child who had a better understanding of life than he did, he answered, "yes, I'd like that," and Joanne hugged him.

"You can take me back now, we've been out here ages."

No sooner had they landed than Joanne was introducing her best friend Kathleen and Ron was straight back up in the air getting twenty questions again.

The morning flew in and soon they were heading up the steps towards the institute, Neville and Harry both had younger kids on their shoulders while Joanne and Kathleen each had a hold of Ron's hands as they led him towards lunch.

Ron couldn't fail to notice the height of the cliffs as he had to climb up the stairs and understood there was a chance he could be coming back down at a slightly faster pace but he'd take that risk if it meant getting to talk to Millie. Hermione's mum had calmly stood there last night, firing whatever it was she held at a screaming Voldemort and it was easy to see where Hermione's nature came from, Ron was well aware they weren't joking that her parents might throw him off the cliff.

-oOoOo-

Millie was having a day like no other, she'd been astonished at the magical shopping section of Naples and the welcome they received wherever the group went but moving into the muggle area was a revelation. She now understood Joan's comment about the underwear shop but there was just so much choice it was hard to decide, it was only when she thought of Ron's reaction to her wearing these things that her mood dipped. She just didn't know how she was going to deal with that so put it at the back of her mind again so as not to spoil the girls fun.

They were having lunch at their usual spot when Ginny suggested trying the salon opposite, Millie looked at her strangely until she explained that's where she had her hair done and they were very good. She reluctantly agreed and was accompanied by Ginny and Luna as Joan's prediction came true and she went off with her mum to buy some things for the kids.

It was a different Millicent Bulstrode who looked back at Millie from the mirror and it was quite a shock, the girls in the salon had pulled off a miracle as far as she was concerned. Her hair was cut to frame

her face and now had subtle golden highlights through the brown, an eyebrow wax and facial had been followed with the application of makeup, Millie was so pleased with the results she almost spoiled it by crying.

Joan hugged her on sight as they headed into a sports shop for training clothes where Millie's new look and athletic body drew quite a bit of attention from the male assistants, it was a happy group of girls who ended up back at the institute in time to get ready for dinner.

Millie and Joan walked on to the terrace at dinnertime and were immediately accosted by Roger Davies, "Miss Bulstrode, would you do me the honour of joining me for dinner?"

Before she could answer a nervous voice beside her chipped in, "actually Roger, I was hoping she was going to join me, would you do me the honour Millie?"

She turned and there was Ron holding out a red rose for her with pleading in his eyes, she took the rose and just nodded.

Ron then knelt down and offered Joan a yellow rose, "could I borrow your aunty Millicent for a little while please?"

Joan stared straight into his eyes, "you make her cry again and my dad will throw you off the cliff."

"If I make her cry I'll jump of the cliff myself."

Joan accepted this and the rose as she walked over to her parents, leaving them alone, though Roger was not amused as Ron took Millie's hand and led her over to a table for two that had just appeared.

"What are you doing here Ron?"

"I didn't want to leave without talking to you so I begged Harry for the chance to see you, fortunately the Grangers are having a night out with the Lupins and Blacks otherwise I'd be still in that room."

“Harry and Hermione told me why you all split, is it true?”

“Millie I won’t lie to you, I didn’t do anything but knew what mum was planning and would have went along with it. I have been an idiot, asshole and any other words you want to put in there, it cost me my friends and my sister but last night the price was too high. The thought of losing you was the shock that my selfish system badly needed, I haven’t slept or eaten since making you cry and I’m willing to crawl over hot coals just to be with you again.”

Millie had the beginning of tears in her eyes, “you really hurt me last night Ron, I can’t go back to the way things were.”

“I don’t want to go back Millie, I want to go forward with you at my side. Being betrothed means that you intend to spend the rest of your life with that person and that’s what I want more than anything. When you asked me those questions last night I just panicked and my brain shut down, I’m not the cleverest person in the world and it takes a while for some things to sink in. Watching you cry hurt me more than Pettigrew’s knife ever could, I love you Millie and am so proud of my betrothed I’ll stand up on this table and announce it to everyone here if it would make you happy.”

Millie had tears streaming down her face as Roy felt hands bite into each of his shoulders and looked up into the hard gazes of Neville and Harry.

“Hold on a moment guys,” Millie said before grabbing Ron by the front of his robes and pulling him across the table to kiss him senseless, after they were done she spoke to the two wizards without ever taking her eyes off Ron, “sorry guys but I’m going to have to disappoint you both, I’m keeping him!”

Neville laughed while Harry’s comment about a ‘good cliff going to waste’ was only partially in jest.

Ron was holding both her hands on the table, “are you sure Millie?” her nod lifted a great weight off Ron as he smiled at his betrothed,

“Luna was right, you are too good for me. Your new look is fabulous love, I didn’t mention it sooner in case I gave the impression that was the only reason I wanted to make-up.”

She leaned over and whispered in his ear, “wait till you see what I’m wearing underneath.”

Ron’s eyes glazed over as his imagination went into overdrive, using strength of will he didn’t know he possessed he shook his head and had to apologise to his betrothed.

“I’m sorry love, Harry’s done me a great favour I don’t deserve by letting me stay here to speak to you, for us to do anything that breached his hospitality would be like spitting in his face. As much as I want to, I just couldn’t do it.”

Ron found himself being hauled over the table again and the recipient of another snog that registered on the Richter scale.

“Could you tell me what I did to deserve that so I can try and make a habit of it?”

“You thought of others before yourself, you’re learning.”

“I had two five-year-olds very successfully point out the error of my ways today, I’ll introduce you to my new friends Joanne and Kathleen later.”

“If they’re anything like Joan I can’t wait.”

They had finally calmed down enough for their food to arrive though Ron still had one major item to discuss, “Millie I think Harry would let you attend here and I think you should, it’s a far better school than Hogwarts and we could still see each other at Hogsmead weekends. He might even let me come here to see you once in a while, I know he’ll never forgive me and I understand why but he’s not vindictive. What do you think?”

“My place is at my betrothed’s side, would you leave me to come here?”

Ron’s immediate reply of “never!” earned him another searing kiss.

Roger was sitting watching the couple with murder running through his mind; he would have been in there if that carrot-topped dickhead hadn’t showed up. He may have lost this battle but if Bulstrode stayed here she would be his, he was actually shocked she chose Weasley over him tonight. Roger usually got his way with the younger girls, then it was time to move on to the next one – or two as his eyes settled on the Patel twins.

A dunt in his back caused him to turn as he found himself confronted by Lovegood, but this girl was no loony.

“Had Harry asked my opinion you would never have been anywhere near the Institute but as this is a second chance for everyone I’m prepared to give you the benefit of the doubt. All the younger girls in Ravenclaw were well warned about you and while you might be able to get away with collecting girls like trophies in Hogwarts the same does not apply here. This is a much smaller school where we all look out for one another, there’s no place for a Lothario here. Millicent has made her choice and you will respect it otherwise, instead of another notch in your headboard you’ll be looking for another school as you’ll get your arse kicked right out of the Institute.”

Roger wanted to tell this girl to go screw herself but something in her eyes told him this might not be a wise choice so he just gave a grunt and turned back round to the table.

Lee Jordan was bursting with anger, “look Roger, we only added your name because you begged us to get out of that place, Harry and Hermione have went to a lot of trouble to bring us here and I for one am bloody grateful. I phoned home today and it’s all over the British wizarding papers that they not only fought Voldemort last night but also took down Dumbledore to; Harry snapped both their wands in the great hall. Slughorn was arrested for abusing students and the ministry is going to take over the running of Hogwarts from Monday.

Do you really want to go back to that because if you screw with Harry or any of his friends that's your best option, assuming you leave here alive that is."

Roger was torn, on the one hand the Institute was far superior to Hogwarts of even his first year but on the other he'd just been told in no uncertain terms that his 'love them and leave them' policy wasn't going to be tolerated here. He now realised the disadvantage of attending a school where the owners were students, they knew bloody everything that went on in the place.

-oOoOo-

Amber held on to Sirius as they slowly moved across the floor, it could hardly be called dancing but she wasn't going to complain. Asking her aunt if there was a job available as she was sick of the discrimination she faced in Britain was, without a doubt the best decision she ever made. The man who currently held her in his arms was everything she'd dreamed about since being a little girl and then some; tall, dark and hansom just didn't do Sirius justice.

They had gone dancing and she couldn't help but smile as Mr and Mrs Lupin glided past, her aunt was glowing with happiness as she held onto her husband. Pregnancy really suited her and Amber was slightly envious, though she hoped lord Black would ask her to be his lady one day soon. She didn't understand everything that was going on but trusted this wizard with her life, she could tell he was holding back and was sure it had nothing to do with her being a squib.

Their reactions last night when they discovered Millicent had killed that snake had been so over the top that she had felt uncomfortable, until she saw her aunt pounce on Remus and kiss him as though their lives had been saved. Whatever generated the party atmosphere she was grateful for it as she was having a splendid evening.

Emma clung to her husband as they danced, both had almost cried in relief at the destruction of the last horcrux, this could now be ended and their kids lead a near normal life. Yes they would have to face a dragon each but Harry had beaten it last time and they were so much more powerful now. They now had the opportunity to sit back and do

nothing as a now mortal Riddle had to come to the tournament or die, they were both praying for the second option but would be there just in case – as would Amelia with everything she had.

This was a lovely night but next week could easily eclipse it, if the afternoon produced the right result then everyone would be dancing next Saturday night. For the first time since the attack that day in Gringotts she was starting to believe her family might just emerge from this war unscathed.

-oOoO-

The frigging squirrel had its tail in a tuft once more, that high-pitched voice sounded so out of place with the snarling snout that it became surreal. Bella likened it to her sister Cissi wearing her number one haughty expression while farting ‘God save the Queen’ in tune; the two just didn’t belong together.

How he ever expected purebloods to kneel at the paws of Riddle the rodent was beyond her, only the potions she was taking kept her from skewering a squirrel and now the great bushy tailed one was ordering her around again.

Bella suspected that she was the only death eater left in Britain, unfortunately they could neither confirm nor deny this as stupid squirrel had been hopping mad and tortured to death the only person they had with a dark mark.

She was aware that these potions were addictive and rapidly affecting her personality but the alternative of facing up to the reality she now found herself in was just too much for the pureblood. Better to be bombed out your head than trying to cut those pointed furry ears off with a blunt instrument, chewing them off was no longer an option available to her. Searching for food was one thing but how the hell was she supposed to eat nuts without teeth? Squirrel soup or stew was going to be on the menu shortly as she didn’t know how much longer she could stomach this.

When Bella found a copy of today’s Prophet she could now work out exactly how long that would be. If he didn’t kill her for bringing him the

news that Tom Marvolo Riddle had to compete in a tournament or lose his magic then in a week he would be getting his nuts dry-roasted in hell and Bella would be free.

-oOoOo-

Xenophilius Lovegood was chuckling to himself as he came up with more and more ludicrous headlines for tomorrow's special edition, the Prophet thought they had stolen a march on the wily editor with their Hogwarts story but he wished he could see their faces tomorrow when they read this. It was with a sigh that he scrapped all the headlines featuring Voldesquirrel or Squirrelmort, instead deciding on the provocative headline that screamed across the front page.

Black Magic defeats Dark Ritual

Lord Sirius Orion Black was wrongly sent to Azkaban for a crime that saw the man he considered a brother murdered by Voldemort, his actual brother Regulus was also murdered by the direct orders of the self styled dark lord for fighting against him. Regulus had been courted by the dark side and enticed to join before even coming of age, evidence has been presented to the ministry that proves beyond doubt that this young wizard was fighting for the light side when he was killed and has had his name exonerated of any wrongdoing.

It is with this background that Lord Black has sworn to aid his godson Lord Potter in the fight against Voldemort and on Halloween dealt him a massive blow.

“We were aware there was a certain dark ritual that could have returned Riddle to a body and took measures against this. We swapped one of the critical ingredients, which had devastating effects on the result. Lord Voldemort has returned in a new body, unfortunately for him it's in the form of a six-foot squirrel! The leader of the pureblood supremacy movement is not only a half-blood but now has a cute bushy tail and a voice so high it would make a Eunuch sound like a baritone.”

The following photographs show the Potters banishing the bushy-tailed one up a tree before capturing his wand, which was later snapped at Hogwarts. Lord Black described what happened that night.

“The couple in the picture are Ronald Weasley being rescued by his betrothed Millicent Bulstrode after they were abducted earlier in the day from Hogsmead. Both Lord Potter and myself have recommended this courageous witch for an Order of Merlin for facing the three most dangerous terrorists in the country without a wand and still managed to save her wizard. Not only that but she killed Riddle's familiar, a very large poisonous snake and severely injured Bellatrix Lestrange while making their escape from the shrieking squirrel. Voldemort was so upset at the result of the ritual that he tortured Peter Pettigrew to death, poetic justice for the rat who betrayed the Potters to his master on another Halloween night.”

As this blow was being delivered in a graveyard, another plan to defeat Voldemort was coming to life at Hogwarts with ‘Tom Marvolo Riddle’ being forced by binding magical contract to compete in the now Hex-wizard tournament or lose his magic. Hogwarts will be crawling with ministry aurors hoping he'll show up and though the use of glamour's or polyjuice can't be discounted it only works within the same species as the recipient. This reporter fails to see the benefit of turning into a six-foot chipmunk or gerbil as a means of disguise, even ministry aurors aren't that stupid.

Lord Black also explained Dumbledore's actions that night, “Earlier in the Summer Lord Potter had dropped charges against Dumbledore providing he would resign his political positions of power in the wizarding world. When it came to light that three Hogwarts students were missing and the headmaster wasn't even aware of the problem, Minister Bones was left with no option but to recommend Hogwarts come under ministerial control, especially considering the charges faced by the latest head of Slytherin. This left Dumbledore with no job and about to be charged with serious multiple breaches of wizarding law, he decided to go out with a bang by firing a deadly curse into a group of youngsters.”

This editor for one will be eternally grateful that Lord Potter was there otherwise I would be writing an obituary for my thirteen-year-old

daughter who was in the group that the 'headmaster' tried to murder with a deadly curse.

Another person delighted with Lord Potter's actions is the current Hogwarts head of Gryffindor, Percy Weasley.

"When my fiancée and I accepted teaching posts at Hogwarts we assumed the headmaster would aid us in this new challenge, instead he poured administrative tasks that he himself was meant to fulfil in our direction with the result that I didn't even know my brother had been abducted by death eaters. The revelations of Slughorn's behaviour sent me over the edge, this person was directly responsible for my sister and fiancée almost being killed by means of a diary he helped create. I only wish there was a worse punishment than a Dementors kiss that could be applied here."

On the conduct of Dumbledore the former head boy was even more scathing, "the Potter's had their eight-year-old adopted daughter with them and Dumbledore fired a curse that would have cut the little girl in half. This once respected wizard committed this atrocity in full view of the youth of the wizarding world. Only Lord Potter's extraordinary actions prevented a bloodbath in the great hall of Hogwarts."

This great wizard once shone as bright as the robes he famously wore but when we looked beneath the surface what faced us was a whole web of lies and duplicity, theft and abuse of power.

The ministry had been building a cast iron case against Dumbledore but his actions of Halloween speak for themselves, this was not an action that any light sided wizard could even contemplate far less attempt. It would now appear that we have had another dark lord in our midst all these years without even knowing it, like a muggle magician he used his colourful robes and personality as a ruse to fool the public so they couldn't see what he was really up to.

-oOoOo-

Ron and Millie's entrance into the great hall caused quite a stir, since her return Cho had prattled on incessantly about how good the Institute was but the proof was now standing right in front of them. If

two days there could make that change in Millicent Bulstrode then everyone in the hall was going to try like mad to get an Italian transfer as soon as possible.

It had been a tearful goodbye this morning between 'aunt and niece' with Harry eventually saying they could come for a Hogsmead weekend along with Cho, the smile he received from a crying Joan was worth the world to her dad. She promised her aunt Millicent they would go shopping again though no mention was made of Ron joining them; he had a long way to go before Joan would forgive him for making her aunt cry.

Percy actually hugged them both and congratulated Millie on her nomination for an Order of Merlin, the two looked stunned until they noticed what everyone was reading. The old Ron would have exploded at the picture of him being lugged on Millie's shoulder and her nomination, this Ron reached up and kissed her in front of everyone before telling his brother that he was so proud of her.

Millicent just held him tight, this was the wizard she loved publicly acknowledging he returned those feelings and Ron was so going to be rewarded as soon as she could get him out of here.

-oOoOo-

Charlie Weasley was a powerful wizard, both physically and magically. Charlie Weasley was also boiling over with anger at the wizard he had physically pinned to the wall in front of him, the only thing stopping the red head from punching the said wizard's head off was the sight of George lying on a cot with his ear cursed off.

"Just what in the name of Merlin were you two trying to achieve?"

Fred's feet weren't touching the ground as his elder brother looked ready to kill him, "we were trying to lighten the mood, everyone around here is so serious."

Charlie didn't think he could get any angrier but had just been proven wrong, "serious? Of course we're frigging serious! This is a dragon reserve; a mistake here doesn't earn you a detention or lose house

points. A mistake here will cost you a limb or your life, explain to me how twenty dragon handlers puking their guts up is lightning the mood?"

George tried to help his twin, "we thought it was funny."

"You're lying there missing an ear and if I hadn't pulled you out the way that curse would have killed you. Is that funny to you?"

"How were we to know they would react like that?"

Charlie took a deep breath and tried to explain, "this is the real world, you slip someone a potion in their food that makes them violently ill, they're going to treat it as an attack and respond accordingly. They won't laugh, they won't think it's funny, they'll just retaliate and start firing curses at you."

Charlie lowered Fred so his feet at least touched the ground, "we were supposed to take three dragons, nursing mothers mind you, to Hogwarts in a few weeks. We just got an owl that they need six nursing mothers for this weekend; you couldn't have picked a worse time to try a prank. I was going to put your names down to go but I don't think the other handlers will want you anywhere near them, when you perform dangerous work you need to know that the people beside you are trustworthy and reliable. With the best will in the world I can't put Fred or George Weasley into either of those categories."

"What if we apologised?"

"Promised to behave?"

"We really want to go back."

"I'll ask," said a despairing Charlie "all you had to do was make the tea and serve the food, I didn't think even you two could screw that up."

He left the twins with some serious thinking to do, both were more committed than ever to being their own bosses but it would appear

that the only way that would happen was if they kept their heads down and worked. Every time they felt like pulling a prank they would just have to think of their shop, Weasley Wizard Wheezes, and think about the gold they needed to make their dream a reality.

-oOoOo-

Amelia Bones felt as if she was going to be physically sick, the report in front of her generated feelings she didn't know she was capable of. The minister of magic so wished that she had gotten a couple of kicks at the 'slug' that night in Hogwarts, if she had this information then he wouldn't have gotten out of that castle alive.

He had been plying his perversion for many years and continued even after being caught and blackmailed by Riddle, the training and information he had passed to the boy was terrifying and explained how a powerful young wizard was able to create a horcrux at seventeen.

Another event that stood out was the fact that Dumbledore was aware of his behaviour with the young male students and actually brought the pervert back to the castle as head of house. He had originally used the information to get the 'slug' to resign, thus creating a vacancy for a twenty-one-year-old Snape to become head of Slytherin and potions professor despite having no teaching experience and being a marked death eater.

The more she learned about their society the more it sickened her and she was beginning to think that Harry had the right idea, quit the country and leave the bigoted purebloods to seethe in a putrid stew of their own concoction.

As the board of Hogwarts governors entered her office for their meeting she was finally convinced that bigoted Britain could not be saved, it would need torn down and rebuilt from the ground up.

It was the first words out of some pompous prick's mouth that did the trick.

“Minister, we want you to order those people back to Britain and pass a law banning any magical children not of pureblood stock from learning magic anywhere but the ministry approved location of Hogwarts.”

Amelia was amazed at just how far these arseholes would go to protect their hold on any semblance of power, “and just how do you propose we do that?”

The smug bastard replied, “after Saturday the threat from the dark side should be over, we simply arrest the Potters after they compete. We can generate some charges for their attack on the headmaster, which we all witnessed. If they choose to return to Hogwarts and do what they’re told then the whole matter can be dropped.”

Amelia knew she would AK this bastard before ordering the arrest of the Potters but had to think fast, if these pricks started to generate any kind of support this could get ugly very quickly. Opinions in the wizarding world could change more dramatically than the fabled British weather as was proven in the great hall at Halloween, she reached for her mobile knowing Harry would understand that when she called him Lord Potter there was a problem.

“Lord Potter I currently have the Hogwarts board of Governors in my office and they would like a chat with you ... that would be so generous of you my lord, we will expect Dobby and Winky shortly.”

She turned to the board members; “Lord Potter is currently meeting with officials of the Italian government but has extended an invitation for everyone to join him at the Institute.”

“We must move fast before that Potter brat takes Italian citizenship or that could cause serious complications when we arrest the little shit.”

“NEVER INSULT HARRY POTTER IN MY PRESENCE!”

They all spun round to view a sight never seen by any of them, an enraged house elf wearing strange cloths.

“How dare you shout at your betters, punish yourself now!”

Dobby grabbed the wizard and disappeared as Winky spoke, “we are here to take you to the Potter Institute.”

Dobby popped back and between the two elves the party was soon in Italy though they did notice that one of their number was missing.

“Where’s Howard?”

-oOoOo-

Howard was at that moment living a nightmare, that little freak of nature had dropped him in the middle of Diagon Alley. This in itself was not a great problem but the lack of any clothing whatsoever definitely was.

The screams of women reverberated the length of the alley as he scampered up and down, trying to cover himself with his hands while looking for somewhere to get off the busy street but when the screaming began being replaced with laughter he didn’t think it could get any worse.

The first witch who fired a stinging hex at his bare arse soon changed his mind and moving his hands to cover his backside left the women with a more tempting target. With the hexes came shouts and comments, ‘what a lot of fuss over a little thing like that’ hurt more than the hexes.

When a pair of aurors managed to stop laughing long enough to stun the Hogwarts governor, unconsciousness was a blessed relief for the latest pureblood to underestimate Dobby.

A/N A big thank you to all the readers who have read this story and taken the time to write a review.

Chapter 27

The four remaining board members were flabbergasted at their introduction to the Potter Institute; young children were running about laughing and jumping into a swimming pool while adults sat drinking coffee as they kept an eye on them. Some of the students were even wearing swimwear as they alternated between reading their books and cooling off in the water, all four purebloods were of the opinion that children should be rarely seen and definitely not heard so this display of frivolity really set them on edge.

The Potters appeared with Pomona and Minerva along with two people who the governors assumed were from the Italian Ministry, their noses were further put out of joint when Harry totally ignored them and just spoke to Amelia.

“Good to see you again Minister, you know you’re always welcome here Amelia.” There was no mistaking the implication that the governors weren’t. “May I introduce you to Francesco and Eugene of the Italian Ministry.” Again no attempt was made to include any of the four in the conversation.

“Lord Potter, it would seem that your servant misplaced one of our number on the journey here.”

Normally Harry spoke to the purebloods, as they wouldn’t be too happy dealing with the muggle born Lady Potter but since this was exactly the effect the Potters wanted though Hermione took over.

“Dobby,” she called as their little friend appeared. “These gentlemen have suggested that one of their number is missing, do you have any idea what happened?”

“I was following Lord Potter’s orders my Lady, he has stated that bigotry will never be allowed to come to the institute. When I uncovered what type of wizard that man was I divested him in Diagon Alley.”

Hermione was trying not to chuckle, "you may have gotten your words mixed up there Dobby."

She could actually see the twinkle in his eyes, "no Lady Potter, that is the naked truth."

She now had mental images she didn't need but as Dobby popped away the governors were working themselves into a lather, "do you allow servants to speak to you like that? I demand he be punished."

Hermione's features hardened, "Dobby is not a servant but a friend and who the hell are you to come into our home and start making demands?" They were starting to draw quite a crowd, especially since Hermione almost never raised her voice in the Institute, "I for one would like to know what you're doing here since tomorrow morning you will all be out of a job."

They were now seething at this mudblood whelp who dared to question them, "Hogwarts has stood for a thousand years and we will not allow this piss-ant place you laughingly call a school to endanger that. You will all be returning to Hogwarts pending legislation that will make it illegal for any magical person, other than a pureblood to be taught anywhere but Hogwarts."

Little Natalie Macdonald couldn't stay quiet any longer, "this is a fabulous school, from what I've heard much better than Hogwarts and my dad won't let me go there anyway."

The spittle was actually flying from the enraged man at this child having the audacity to answer her betters, he shouted at the child "well then my little mudblood bitch, you'll just have to..."

No one found out what Natalie would have to do as Harry had the man by the throat before he could finish the sentence, "no one uses that word in my school, you will apologise to this young lady immediately or I will be seriously upset."

Hermione was knelling beside the trembling Natalie, "that's why your father didn't want you to go to Hogwarts, no matter how good you and I are we will never be anything else but that to some of the magical

people in Britain. No one holds those beliefs here though and that is why we'll be staying in Italy."

The man tried to mumble an apology but Natalie had got herself together and was having none of it, "you're only saying that because Harry has you by the throat so I don't accept your apology. You don't mean it, I don't want it so stick it up your jumper."

Hermione was worried for a second what the young witch was going to say but seeing her standing up to this arsehole filled her with pride, now it was time these bastards learned the facts of life. "Sixteen of us swore on our magic never to return to Hogwarts as students but you're going to change the law to force the ministers niece back there?" Hermione noticed Amelia was trying to hide the smile she was wearing at their treatment of these pricks.

"Everyone here rejected Hogwarts in favour of the Institute," she turned to the crowd that was now everyone in the Institute, "would anyone here like to change their minds?"

A resounding shout of "NO!" came from every mouth, including the professors.

Harry now took over, "you come to our home making demands and issuing threats with what authority? In Italy we don't care whether you're a pureblood or not because it's of no importance, we have some of the most prominent British purebloods among our staff and students but they're treated no differently than anyone else and that's the way they want it. Miss Macdonald here may be a first generation witch but she and her family are under the protection of house Potter and I could legally duel you for that derogatory comment you made against her but we do things differently here."

Hermione summoned all the governor's wands as the fighting teams swung into action; the Grangers had been sitting enjoying a coffee with Sirius, Amanda and Remus when these pricks appeared. Neville and Luna were exponent's of the study / swim method of passing a delightful Sunday afternoon so, while Hermione had been talking the other six had been pairing up and choosing their targets.

The four unwelcome visitors found themselves being dragged onto the terrace in the direction of the railing; all of the eight grabbed an arm and a leg of each governor as they began to bodily swing them while chanting. And a one, and a two, and a three - and four purebloods were released to go sailing over the safety railing that was there to protect people from falling off the cliff, it wasn't so good at protecting those thrown over it though as their screams echoed around the building. The screams ended abruptly and were promptly replaced by the entire student body of the Institute cheering.

Amelia, Francesco and Eugene were appalled, they'd just watched four men murdered and were unsure of what to do. Harry gave them a smile that left them wondering if they would be next, "relax, and come with us for a few minutes."

Dobby and Winky popped the three of them down to the beach where Pomona, Minerva, Harry and Hermione joined them as they walked up to the four bodies lying face down in the sand.

It wasn't until they got closer that Amelia noticed they weren't actually lying on the beach but floating about six inches above it, they were wide awake while appearing to be in a full body bind.

Harry addressed the soon to be ex-governors, "This isn't Hogwarts gentlemen, we don't let monsters in our school or employ professors who try to kill the students. We consider the safety of the people in our care our most important obligation therefore the cliff is warded so that anyone falling off gets saved, though captured until we can investigate how they came to fall off it in the first place. Since our piss-ant school opened there's yet to be a detention issued as all these students are here because they want to learn and we have so many placement enquires to fill the Institute more than twice over."

Harry's demeanour changed as his voice became as cold as ice, "we've tried to just withdraw from Britain and live our lives peacefully but a percentage of British purebloods are never going to let it go so this is the only warning you're going to get, come after us and we will retaliate with every means at our disposal."

Harry called for Dobby and Winky, “place these gentlemen, fully clothed, in Diagon Alley then bring us some refreshments please.”

Even in these instructions Dobby found some room to be creative, therefore it was to howls of laughter that the four appeared in the window of Madam Malkin's Robes for All Occasions. They were of course fully clothed but now modelling the latest of ladies fashionable wear though Dobby's fashion sense was rather unique. The elves hadn't been ordered to remove the full body binds so left them in place as the four new mannequins looked out from the display window, seeing people they knew pissing themselves laughing at their very public predicament.

Back at the Institute Minerva had conjured a table and chairs for them while Hermione waved up to Joan and Natalie just to let them know that everything was fine. Both went back to playing in the pool under the watchful eyes of just about everyone in the place.

The elves returned with refreshments as Francesco looked as if he needed a long, cool drink. “Harry I've never seen anything that disgusted me as much as a school governor screaming at a child because of the circumstances of her birth, part of me was cheering as you threw them off the cliff.”

Eugene concurred, “we hear stories coming out of Britain but that's all they are, when you see it for yourself it's sickening. Is that typical of the treatment first generation magic users receive?”

Harry thought for a few seconds before replying, “that was maybe a touch excessive because we've backed them into a corner but in general terms the answer would be yes.”

“Harry it's worse than you think,” Amelia said “after Voldemort is defeated they want me to have you both arrested on Saturday with some triumphed-up charges and force you back to Hogwarts.”

It was a thoughtful Hermione who summed it up, “so Dumbledore gone, Voldemort dealt with and Harry and I lose our magic leaving the purebloods once more in total control of magical Britain. I can see how this would be attractive to them.”

Amelia nodded her head, “you know of course that neither Shack or myself would ever give that order but just the fact they’re even thinking about it makes me sick to my stomach, if you ever have a job for me just say the word. I’ve reached the opinion that magical Britain can’t be saved in its present form, it’ll have to be torn down and built from the ground up.”

“We reached the same conclusion which is why we applied to the Italian ministry for citizenship.”

“Lord Potter on behalf of the Italian ministry can I say that we will support you in every way that we can, we have had our eyes opened today with both our tour of this lovely school and the conditions you are trying to leave behind. I’m sure we can guarantee your citizenship before Saturday for all of your party and we have discussed the other matters and look forward to working with you for many years to come.” Francesco and Eugene stood and shook everyone’s hand before taking their leave.

“Sorry to land that on you today Harry but I didn’t want them having time to spread their ideas around people who would be receptive to them. I thought you dealt with the situation brilliantly.”

“Can you stay for the day?” asked Hermione “we really need a plan of action that covers more than the Institute and will arrange a meeting for after dinner tonight.”

Amelia was delighted at the chance to get to spend the afternoon with Susan and Hannah as the other four worked on an agenda for tonight’s meeting.

-oOoOo-

Jillian Green was wondering why she had been included in tonight’s meeting but the revelations that she heard had her head spinning.

Harry started the meeting, "can I say right from the off that the Institute will remain open, this is non-negotiable as too many of our futures are tied into this venture and it's the right thing to do."

This settled everyone as the meeting continued, "the bigoted purebloods are beginning to realise the threat this venture is to their power base, both politically and financially. They are already trying to make life difficult for us and this meeting is to tailor our response to that threat."

It was a thoughtful Amelia Bones who replied first, "Harry I can no longer continue as minister for magic, I could never be a party to some of the suggestions made today and will resign after the tournament is completed. I will hold off long enough to watch your backs and offer whatever protection I can while you're forced to return to Britain for the tournament but I could not do this job past Christmas. I find myself taking more showers than at any time in my life and I need to get out before I become acclimatised and all the stench starts not to bother me."

Hermione had a big smile on her face; "Amelia we had a job already picked out for you and were hoping we could entice you away from the ministry in the New Year. Our meeting with the Italian ministry was not just about our citizenship but the future of our students and even their families. What do you think will happen when the first student's job application form arrives on someone's desk with the Potter Institute listed as the school they attended? Our students will be ostracised in Britain so we are looking to arrange an alternative for them, the Italian ministry have offered instant citizenship to any student who completes their education at the Institute. This offer also includes their immediate family and all hell will break loose in Britain if this news leaks."

Hermione gave that news a minute to sink in before continuing, "it's not just that their ministry agrees with what we're doing here but the fact that everything in the Institute has been purchased locally and the fact our students all spend their gold in Naples has been a big boost to the local wizarding economy. We're looking to buy land and build our own village, even if we open a couple of shops or businesses they'll still be buying their produce or raw materials locally

which helps everyone. We would like you to head this project Amelia and be our link to the Italian ministry, we have a couple of years yet before we get our first graduates but I would like the option to be open to students and their families by the time they've sat their OWL's. This should open up a whole new world of careers to them."

Everyone at the meeting thought this was a brilliant idea but none of them were under any illusions that the British purebloods would do anything but retaliate.

Harry brought Gillian into the conversation, "we may have to re-think our plans to have the orphanage located at the former Malfoy manor, the link between ourselves is now well known and I couldn't let anything happen to the children because of us. I know that Joan is the only child to have been adopted since we brought you out here and for that I feel I must apologise."

Jillian bursting into laughter was not the reaction that the Potters expected, "forgive me but that was just too funny, in all the time I've been associated with the orphanage the children in its care have never been happier. The people in this room have given of their time so freely that their days are filled with Minerva's magic, Hermione's stories and even Dan introducing them to the Saturday morning cartoons. The older children have been so kind to them and they love sitting on the terrace, eating their meals and chatting with whoever joins the table. You have provided them with such a better life and hope for the future with the promise of an education that your apology just cracked me up."

It was a relieved Harry who answered, "we had hoped to convince you to stay in Italy and we'll build a new orphanage beside the Institute, we also want to attach some stables and provide horse riding as a pastime."

Emma started celebrating and kissed Dan, who was left to do the explaining, "After watching Joan on that pony in New Zealand we had a bet as to how long it would take to have them here at the Institute. I just lost and owe my lovely wife a night out, can I borrow the Ferrari son?"

Harry could only nod his head while smiling at the folly of betting against the Granger women, "Jillian we will open an office in Diagon Alley where prospective parents can make an appointment to visit and allow the ministry child services a contact point. We may find ourselves with the occasional Italian child but I think this would always be a short-term measure if the local authorities were stretched."

Minerva spoke next, "we have a problem in identifying next years students, the first generation magic users will just be contacted by Hogwarts and we have no access to the list."

It was a thoughtful Hermione who asked the question, "How does the list work?"

"The magical book records every birth of a witch or wizard in Britain, it automatically generates the Hogwarts letter and sends it to the correct address by owl on their eleventh birthday."

"So let me see if I've got this right," said Hermione "the magical book has the name and date of birth of every witch and wizard under the age of eleven?"

"Yes," answered Minerva, using her explaining to small child voice "but without the addresses we have no way to contact them."

Hermione just glanced to her mum and dad, "Just leave that to us, with a name and date of birth it's a lot easier to trace someone in the non-magical world. For people of magical backgrounds an advert in the Quibbler inviting applications should do the trick. That book should have most of our students for the next ten years in it, how do we get at it and can it be copied?"

"I'm certain the information could be reproduced but not the enchantments that power the book. I would need to get into my old office at Hogwarts to do it though."

"We're planning on awarding Millicent Bulstrode the Order of Merlin, first class, officially it will be for rescuing her betrothed but we all

know it's for rendering Voldemort mortal." A few gasps around the room alerted Amelia to the fact that they didn't all know and she'd put her foot in it.

"Ok, everything said in here tonight is confidential and nothing more so than that last statement." The tone of Hermione's voice left no one in any doubt she was deadly serious, her eyes travelled from Jillian to Minerva taking in Filius, Poppy and Amber en route. "My husband has already destroyed Voldemort three times but he had taken steps to ensure he could keep coming back. We've been working to ensure that couldn't happen again and that bloody reptile was the last piece of the puzzle, Millicent killing that snake has saved lives, some of them might even be in this room now. That piece of information is the biggest secret in the wizarding world at the moment and could endanger many lives if it became public knowledge."

Harry continued seamlessly from where his wife left off, "Most of us saw what happened when Dumbledore realised his number was up, he wanted to go out in a blaze of glory so can you imagine what Voldemort would do? We're hoping his life as a squirrel is so bad that he will accept his fate, thinking that he won't actually die and have the opportunity to return in a more suitable body."

Poppy was looking at her daughter who got the slightest of nods from Harry, "yes mum I knew, the diary that possessed me in second year was one and I was there when they destroyed another in Hogwarts before saving me again. I don't like keeping secrets from you but that wasn't my secret to tell and Riddle might have moved them had he heard even a whisper of what was going on."

Poppy just hugged her daughter, "I'm not angry at you Ginny, just sorry you couldn't share that burden."

"She shared it with us Poppy," said Luna "Neville and I weren't involved in those operations but it was worse just sitting here praying for their safe return."

Minerva's quick mind had put together the pieces and she now had tears in her eyes at the enormity of what these two had achieved, "I'm so proud to even say I know you far less work for you both."

Sirius was never one to let a situation get too serious for long, "why thank you Minnie, Remus and I are quite fond of you too."

Her pretend scowl just cracked everybody up and it was left to Amelia to get things back on track, "I agree with Minerva and there isn't an award high enough for what you've achieved though I totally understand your reasons for refusing any and all from the British establishment. We could hold Miss Bulstrode's award ceremony on Friday night in Hogwarts, invites would of course be coming your way and if Minerva and I went missing for fifteen minutes I'm sure you could cover for us."

This sounded like an excellent plan that was quickly agreed upon though Amelia's mood darkened at the next part, "I was hoping we could just let Dumbledore die in peace without ripping the wizarding world apart with another sensational trial but I now realise I was wrong. You have destroyed the man but unless we go ahead and demolish the mythical reputation he had fabricated for himself then I fear we may face repercussions in the future. There are some very short memories going about and the last thing we want is that manipulative old bastard being hailed a martyr and providing a rallying point for an anti-Potter movement."

"Could we do it on Friday then we would only have to go to Britain once, stay at mum and dad's after the award ceremony on Friday night then back home after the tournament on Saturday." Harry thought for a moment, "we'll need to factor in a visit to Gringotts as well."

Amelia agreed the trial would be for Friday morning and, considering the amount of evidence levied against the old coot, it shouldn't last long.

"Why do we need to go to Gringotts?" asked Dan.

“We have substantial holdings in the British wizarding world, I wish to use these to cause the bigots as much harm as possible.”

Sirius immediately concurred, “The Blacks are in the same position and I would like to join you on this,” his next words were spoken to Harry but his eyes never left Amber “the Blacks are also leaving Britain, settling down in Italy sounds like a great idea to me and if I can also hurt the society that sentenced me to hell for twelve years while murderers walked free so much the better.”

Harry was trying not to smirk, “we already got you a house next to Remus and Pomona, we were just saving it as a wedding present.”

Sirius still hadn’t taken his gaze from Amber, “not before Saturday,” he whispered, “I don’t want to jinx all the good fortune that’s been coming my way.”

“I can wait,” answered Amber then immediately proceeded to make a liar out of herself by pouncing on Sirius and fiercely kissing him.

“One last thing Harry,” Amelia asked “when you offered some tutoring for the young Hogwarts professors did you include Percy Weasley in that?”

Harry glanced at Ginny for some guidance but she just shrugged, “as far as we’re aware he was never involved in the plot against us, Percy would never break the rules. His treatment of Ginny’s predicament still leaves a lot to be desired though so we may have to think about it.”

“He was apparently hoping to apologise to Ginny for his behaviour but was too busy beating up Sluggy and then comforting his fiancée. The Clearwater girl has been extremely good for him and pointed out the error of his ways by using her wand aimed at his ‘wand’ and threatening a banishing charm if he ever even thought about selling one of their children. I think we can safely say that Percy is going to be a changed man, one way or the other.”

A bemused Neville asked a question that he couldn't figure the answer to, "Harry, if you can build a new orphanage next to the Institute, why not extend the Institute to hold more students?"

Harry beamed at his brother in all but name, "Nev, we could easily up our numbers here but we have no intention of doing so. We like the atmosphere generated by the fact we all know each other so well and the smaller classes make for a much improved lesson."

"Harry is quite correct," said Minerva "at Hogwarts we were limited to learning one spell a lesson to allow the slower students to keep pace. Here classes are small enough that the gifted can forge ahead while I even have time to aid any stragglers."

Neville had to admit that he enjoyed classes much more here than he ever did at Hogwarts.

-oOoOo-

Harry was tucking Joan in when the twitching nose alerted him that she was troubled about something.

"Dad, why did that man scream at my friend Natalie?"

It was a sombre Harry who tried to answer his daughter, "In Britain there are people who think they are better than everyone else just because of who their parents are, I love your mum's parents but that man today would class her the same as Natalie because they're not magical."

She thought for a minute before asking in a hurt voice, "Is that why no one ever picked me?"

Harry had her in his arms in seconds, "if you had been picked then we would never have gotten to meet and I can't imagine our lives without our wonderful daughter. Never ever think you're not good enough because we think Joan Potter is the most perfect daughter in the whole wide world. It doesn't matter to me if your biological father

was a prince or a pauper, all that matters is that you now call me dad and my heart does cartwheels every time I hear it.”

Joan was clinging to her father when she felt another pair of arms join the hug as her mother kissed the top of her head.

“Listen sweetie, men like that is one of the main reasons we’re living in Italy. They wouldn’t put up with behaviour like that in this country.”

“But why do they allow it in Britain then?”

Harry couldn’t help but think that the child’s logic always managed to get right to the heart of the problem, “because that’s the way it’s been for hundreds of years and the people with the power don’t want it to change. Britain once led the magical world but they then seemed to think there was no more to do and have rested on their laurels for so long that the rest of the world is now passing them by. They couldn’t care less how bad a state the country gets into because this is all they’ve known for generations and they’re teaching their children the same values.”

Hermione tried to give her an example, “when your aunt Ginny’s parents tried to get a bride price for her to build a new house, her brothers accepted this because they had been raised to believe this was acceptable behaviour for purebloods.”

There was a slight look of panic in the child’s eyes, “I hope I’m not a pureblood!”

Hermione chuckled before kissing her on her brow, “sweetie there isn’t enough gold on this planet that could buy you from your dad though I do pity any boyfriends you bring home. Between your dad, granddad, uncles and aunts the poor boy is in for a tough time of it.”

Harry quietly thought that Emma and Hermione would be worse than the rest of them put together and any potential suitors were in for the grilling of their lives.

Joan made a face that only an eight-year-old could pull off, “yuk! Who wants a boyfriend? I’d rather have a pony any day.”

It was a much-relieved father who answered his daughter, “that is the best news I’ve heard all day so we’ll just have to see what we can do about it.”

Joan’s whole face lit up with an expression that melted both her parents’ hearts, “really? A pony?”

Harry tucked her in before kissing her cheek, “really.”

Joan watched as her parents left her room with their arms around each other, her dreams tonight wouldn’t now feature that purple-faced man screaming at her. Instead they would be filled with equestrian adventures and the thought that she was so glad nobody had picked her before her mum and dad visited the orphanage.

-oOoOo-

Amelia entered the great hall as the students were at breakfast and the audible sigh of relief from some of the older students was not for her presence but rather for the people she’d brought with her.

The minister of magic made her way up to the podium and addressed the hall, “good morning Hogwarts, as of today the school comes under ministerial control. The older students amongst you will of course recognise the people with me, Madam Griselda Marchbanks is head of the Wizarding Examinations Authority and has agreed to take over the role of headmistress until a suitable replacement can be found. Professor Tofty is a senior examiner but has consented to teach potions and be the new head of Slytherin while the defence course will be taught by a rotating pool of aurors.”

Cheers and applause greeted the announcement as these appointments definitely met with the student’s approval, comments like ‘at last, people who know what they’re doing’ came from every house table. Amelia might be quitting her job and even this country at Christmas but that didn’t mean she wasn’t going to do her best until

then to ensure whoever took over from her found a much better situation than she had inherited.

Her next announcement went down even better, “this Friday, dinner will be a slightly more formal occasion as the ministry expresses its thanks one of your own. For exceptional bravery and courage under fire Miss Millicent Bulstrode is being awarded the Order of Merlin, First Class.”

The noise was thunderous, even Slytherins lost their usual reserved manners at the news that a member of their house was receiving this most prestigious award. Ron was actually sitting with his betrothed at the Slytherin table as they now ate all their meals together at one of their house tables and no-one was going to object, especially now.

He was kissing Millie congratulations when she suddenly shot out of his arms and ran away, he was confused until the reason became apparent as she returned with her arms around her parents.

“Lord Potter wrote to us and explained what happened before we read about it in the Prophet, we’re so proud of you,” said her mother.

“As are we,” said Amelia who had came up behind them, “there will be an award ceremony here on Friday night where you four will be the guests of honour.”

A delighted Millicent lost her smile as a thought that proved she was all woman crossed her mind, “what am I going to wear?”

Amelia was laughing before pulling out a note, “this is permission to leave the school on Thursday, and a certain elf will collect both Bulstrode women for a day’s shopping with Emma, Hermione and Joan in Naples.”

The head of the Bulstrode family hadn’t said a word since entering the hall, every father thinks their daughter is beautiful but the change in Millicent since the first of September had shocked him into silence. She was currently entangled with her betrothed, whirling the red head around in her joy that had her giggling loudly and half the hall was

laughing with her instead of at her. The medal would bring great honour to their family but the change in his daughter's behaviour and appearance was a greater reward to the very proud father.

-oOoOo-

The sound of sobbing from the ministry holding cell wasn't heard by another living soul due to the heavy silencing charms in place, distraught didn't even begin to describe how Molly Weasley felt.

She had been informed that the trial of Albus Dumbledore would be held on Friday and she would be called as a witness, this news extinguished the last faint glimmer of hope she had managed to keep burning. Molly was sat on her bed, which, apart from the commode was the only thing in the cell taking stock of her situation.

She was wearing a grey threadbare robe that by no stretch of the imagination could be called flattering, combined with the fact that her hair was refusing to grow back and the bald witch didn't have a lot going for her.

It was bad enough that everyone was going to hear what she had attempted but to go to court looking like this was just too much for Molly Weasley. She was aware that she had shed a few pounds since her incarceration but it would have to be stones before she looked any better in these robes.

Molly had resigned herself to the fact that Azkaban beckoned and her only goals in life now were a hot bath and a clean robe before having to face everyone in court. She realised that this was a trivial matter compared to the charges she was facing but it was all she had left, to accept her punishment with whatever dignity she could muster.

She was sure Harry would be under the thumb of that bossy mudblood bitch and wouldn't lift a finger to help, Molly's only consolation was that her daughter was safe and not being pawed over by some old man after Arthur's incredible stupidity.

-oOoOo-

Bella awoke to find herself entranced by the red eyes of her beloved master, she could feel his gentle touch caressing her body.

“I’m sorry I hurt you Bella but I need you to find that goblet for me.”

Bella had been lost in those eyes until he opened his snout and spoke in that grotesque voice, then it all came flooding back to her with the force of a tsunami.

The night in the graveyard, a half-blood rodent and then her being crucioed into unconsciousness for returning with the news that ‘it’ would have to compete in a tournament or lose ‘its’ magic.

Her body was trembling from the cruciatus exposure while her mind seemed even more confused than it had been lately, but not as confused as Riddle the squirrel who seemed to take her bodies reactions as proof ‘its’ ministrations were having a positive effect on the female death eater.

Bellatrix had no intention of providing creature comforts for this abomination of magic so did the only thing any pureblood princess could do, she vomited all over his fur.

The Technicolor yawn seemed to take the edge of the randy rodent’s ardour as Bella silently swore on her mother’s grave that she would kill the squirrel before she allowed it to put its paws on her again.

Bella knew the dark lord was one sick puppy but thinking squirrel seduction techniques had a cat-in-hell’s chance of working on a pureblood witch emphasised just how delusional the great bushy-tailed one had become – she needed to get away from here.

A/N thanks for reading and a special thank-you to those who took the time to review my story, it is much appreciated.

Chapter 28

You could be forgiven for thinking that the British magical community would be getting immune to shocks but they seemed to just get bigger and keep right on coming as the whole country was again buzzing with news.

Voldemort was a squirrel – Dumbledore in jail – Hogwarts under ministerial control – trial of the century on Friday – tournament to end all tournaments on Saturday.

Eavesdropping on any conversation would find at least one of these subjects under discussion as everyone had an opinion on what was happening, while their opinions may differ what no one could dispute was that things were defiantly happening.

-oOoOo-

Hogwarts Tuesday morning brought a smile to the minister of magic's face, the difference in atmosphere was palpable as the changes in personnel began to take effect on the student's moral. Amelia also had twenty aurors staying in the castle, some were acting as teaching assistants while others patrolled the corridors but all were highly visible.

The thought of Riddle attacking the school to acquire hostages was giving her nightmares; Harry's berating of the former governors over student safety had struck a chord with her, she wouldn't be able to relax until this was all over.

The minister was here today to escort Percy Weasley to the Potter Institute, he was going to be the first young Hogwarts professor to spend a few weeks there learning his craft purely because they wanted him out the way when they broke into 'his' office on Friday night.

Amelia knew if they were caught the repercussions would be very serious but she had lived her life by doing what she thought was right and, after spending Sunday afternoon with Susan, Hannah and their friends she knew this was the right thing to do.

Amelia had faced bigotry all her life, not over her blood status but simply the fact she was a woman. When she was younger the current minister turned quite a few heads and her blond hair belied the intelligence that she had in abundance. It usually only took being knocked on their arses a couple of times for her male colleagues to get past the 'dumb blond' perception and treat her as a person.

When Voldemort killed her parents Amelia's heart hardened as she pushed herself to be the best auror she could be but when her brother and his family were wiped out it almost turned to granite, almost except for Susan. It was pure luck she had the child staying with her that weekend otherwise her whole family would have been murdered by the evil bastard she was hoping to see finally get what he deserved this Saturday.

Only two things in this world really mattered to Amelia Bones, Susan's happiness and getting revenge for her family. The death eaters had all but been wiped out in Britain and Susan was now happier, with better prospects than at any time in her short life and all thanks to Lord Harry James Potter. The head of the Bones family would walk through the gates of hell for that young man and only her ministerial position currently prevented her formally allying their houses. If she could use her position to help the magical children of Britain get a better life then she had no qualms about breaking the law to do so, Amelia also fully intended to make Hogwarts the best she possibly could before leaving for Italy at Christmas.

-oOoOo-

Percy entered the Institute unsure of his welcome; Pomona and Harry were waiting to greet him.

"Welcome to the Potter Institute professor Weasley."

"Thank you headmistress but I feel I haven't earned that title yet, especially from you. Lord Potter I can't thank you enough for this opportunity which my previous behaviour doesn't warrant, Penelope

is trying to knock some sense into me though she fears she may need a beaters bat.”

“It’s Harry Percy, just Harry.”

“Could we keep it formal for just a moment? I would like to ask what happened with my parents? Bill and Charlie were so incensed about Ginny we never got around to discussing anything else and all other sources just keep coming back as classified.”

Harry didn’t detect any malice in the question, he just saw someone trying desperately to find their place in life, “Percy Molly drew her wand on Hermione’s mother in a muggle area and got her arse kicked by mum, she then tried to invoke pureblood law and gave Hermione the choice of either breaking up with me or watching her mother kissed by a dementor.”

Percy visibly struggled to retain his breakfast, how could anyone do that to someone they claimed was like a son to them?

“I’m an easy going guy Percy until somebody threatens my family, then I will use everything that I have to neutralise that threat. I am positive you were unaware of her plot to use illegal potions against my wife and I, had that taken place I would have declared a blood feud against the Weasley family and been in no mood to be merciful.”

The image of Harry dealing with Dumbledore in the great hall was enough for Percy to need the bucket that the strange house elf had just appeared with, his mind was in as much turmoil as his stomach as he tried to comprehend what his family had done. It was even harder considering that Harry had swung into action to rescue Ginny from what a seriously angry Penelope described as a ‘fate worse than death’ and then put his families lives on the line by facing Voldemort to rescue Ron and Millicent.

Pomona led the shocked wizard for a seat as a tea service appeared in front of them, Percy had trouble getting the cup to his mouth as his hand was shaking so much from the effects of information he’d just heard. There was not one shred of doubt in Percy’s mind that Harry

was deadly serious or that he was more than capable of carrying out his threat and ending the life of each and every Weasley.

“Harry I thought they were in jail because of complications or irregularities with Ginny’s adoption, I would never participate in anything illegal like trying to break a betrothal. It has also been rather forcibly brought to my attention that while Ginny’s situation may have been within the current laws that didn’t make it acceptable, this is a view I now share with my fiancée and can only hope Ginny will let me try and apologise.”

Harry could see that Percy was sincere but warned him anyway, “Ginny is only now starting to recover from basically being sold to the highest bidder by the man she trusted above all others but her brothers casual acceptance of the situation has given her scars that may never heal. Bill was here for a while trying to help her come to terms with it but she wouldn’t even look in Ron’s direction last week, I’ll tell her you would like to talk to her but the final decision is hers and hers alone. Ginny is our friend and we’re very protective of our friends here, you’ll find the atmosphere a lot different than the antagonistic attitudes encouraged at Hogwarts.”

Percy was about to defend Hogwarts when Pomona cut him off, “I would suggest the best way to treat this trip is to keep your eyes, ears and mind wide open while the mouth stays firmly shut, you’re here to learn a different way of doing things but it will take an open mind. If people like Minerva and Filius think this is a better system of learning then it would be prudent to give it a try, when you have made your own mind up then adjust your teaching style accordingly.”

Percy nodded in agreement before being led away by Brutus to his room.

“Do you think Percy will ever lose the brush pole that’s stuck up his arse?”

Harry couldn’t help but laugh at his favourite headmistress’s comments, “I think Remus is corrupting you but to answer the question I suspect we need to make sure he sits down to dinner

tonight with Joanne and Kathleen. Penelope appears to be a good influence on him and those two managed to get Ron's head out of his selfish arse. If Percy upset's Ginny though he's out of here!"

-oOoOo-

Ginny had more on her mind than easing Percy the prat's conscience, she was in the same class with him as McGonagall demonstrated how transfiguration should be taught. Her best friends were in this bloody tournament where Riddle might make an appearance and before that the trial that was going to rake up a lot of mud that could end up heading in her direction.

Hermione had recommended she go with them and then everyone would see she was Ginny Pomfrey and sitting beside the Potters, that should hopefully silence a lot of the criticism that could come her way. She was dreading seeing Molly as Amelia had informed them she would be a witness against Dumbledore but Bill told her that it was Arthur's idea to sell her, apparently Molly had went ballistic when she found out what he'd done.

This fact brought the young witch no comfort as she was sure the woman would have had some other diabolical plan that involved using her body to bring gold to the Weasleys, quite hard to reconcile that your former parents were going to use you for a legalised form of prostitution. She had till Thursday to make her mind up but since it was now Wednesday and she still wasn't sure then Ginny was going to have a long chat with mum tonight.

-oOoOo-

Susan, Hannah, Daphne and Tracy were the delegation that approached Pomona with a serious matter; as usual it was Hannah who got the ball rolling.

"Headmistress, we would like to attend the tournament on Saturday to show our support for Harry and Hermione."

Susan backed her up, “all the other contestants will have the support of their schools and we want to let them all know that we back our champions.”

Pomona frowned, “well, technically they’re not entered as Potter Institute students since we weren’t invited to compete.”

Tracy butted in, “I really don’t think that matters as they will be perceived as representing the Institute.”

Daphne pressed home the point, “therefore us not going will be interpreted as not supporting them and that can’t be allowed to happen.”

Pomona could see the girls were very serious and this wasn’t some ruse to get them away for the day, “are there more students who feel like this?”

“Pretty much everyone,” came back at the headmistress in four different voices.

Pomona had one rule when dealing with head of school duties; she would just think ‘what would the whiskered wanker do’ and then do the complete opposite. He would have dismissed the girls out of hand and thrown some feeble excuse their way like a master tossing a bone to a starving dog and expect them to be grateful for his attention.

These girls were concerned for their friends and the more Pomona thought about it she found herself actually agreeing with their point of view, “ok girls I’ll speak to Harry and Hermione and get their opinions on the matter before I get back to you. I have to warn you though we have safety concerns for Saturday and they might not want our students anywhere near Hogwarts, and also everyone and their granny wants to attend so tickets might be difficult to come by.”

The witches left happy knowing at least their concerns had not only been listened to but given a fair hearing, they might not get the outcome they wanted but at least they would know why that decision was made – they may not like it but you had to respect it.

-oOoOo-

Glenda Bulstrode hadn't slept a wink, she was excited, apprehensive and more than a little overawed at the thought of meeting the Potters. The Bulstrodes would have been considered middle-class in the muggle world, comfortable without being wealthy, pureblood but with little influence and absolutely no aspirations of doing any social climbing. Neither side had thought them important enough to court their support the last war and that suited the family just fine.

They had no books on etiquette in the house and when Glenda asked Millicent how she was supposed to greet Lord and Lady Potter her daughter had just laughed at her, now she was standing beside Millicent, clutching her bag containing the gold her husband had given her while staring at the oddest house elf she'd ever seen.

"We're ready Dobby."

Glenda didn't like to contradict her daughter but she didn't feel anywhere near ready.

The elf called Dobby deposited them on a large terrace that was obviously their dining facility where everyone seemed to be just finishing breakfast, formal introductions went over the cliff when, with a battle cry of 'aunt Millicent!' a little dark haired girl hit her daughter with the force of a stunning spell. Both were laughing as Millicent spun her round and the distraction caused Glenda to turn back around and be faced with a tanned and muscled youth who owned the greenest pair of eyes she'd ever seen.

"Hi, I'm Harry, this is my wife Hermione and that bundle of mischief that just attacked your daughter is Joan."

Glenda didn't know what to do as her mind went on a vacation that involved lots of sun, bare skin and the liberal application of lotions, Harry Potter had just shook her hand and was now taking her by the arm.

“Let’s get you something to drink while we finish our breakfast, those two will be a while yet.” Joan was still in her aunt Millicent’s arms and talking a mile a minute as she filled her in on everything that had been going on since they last met, Harry couldn’t help but chuckle as he heard ‘pony’ mentioned for at least the third time.

Glenda was half way through her coffee before her brain finally rebooted, “oh where are my manners, I’m sorry but I just got a bit overawed there, I’m Glenda Bulstrode.”

Dan was laughing, “don’t worry Glenda, you should see the effect Harry has on the witches just walking down Diagon Alley, Hermione’s almost had to draw her wand a couple of times.”

“I thought they were after you dad,” answered Hermione

“No, that was just the wizards,” chipped in Harry drawing laughter from all the table and Glenda finally got to say what she needed to.

“I would like to thank you all from the bottom of my heart for what you did for my daughter, Millicent told me they wouldn’t have made it if you hadn’t turned up and got them out of there. For that the Bulstrode family owes you a debt that can never be repaid.”

Harry again took the tearful witches hand, “if there is any debt then it is from the Potters to your daughter, her actions that night did us a great service and, should you ever need anything you only have to ask.”

Glenda could feel the sincerity pouring out this young wizard as her daughter made her way over, “mum, this is Joan who just might challenge her mother as the smartest witch I know.”

Watching Millicent’s interactions with this young girl was yet another whole new side to her daughter that hadn’t been revealed before, her head was already spinning and she’d been forewarned by Millicent that the shopping experience would have that effect on her, perhaps she needed something stronger than coffee.

Emma recognised the look, “hi Glenda I’m Emma, and don’t worry I know exactly how you feel. The first time we met Harry he informed us he was marrying our daughter and then we had to fight our way out the bank, Dan still has that goblin’s sword hanging on our wall.”

Glenda was beginning to get her head round the problem she was having, she was looking at this situation as a pureblood. This was where a lord who you owed a life debt to would have had you kissing their boots while they deliberated over what they wanted, these people were..?

Just people didn’t sound right for this extraordinary group but it was the best she could come up with, little did she know that she would have made Lord Harry James Potter’s day with that sentiment.

Glenda had tears running down her cheeks, the day had been one revelation after another but nothing had prepared her for the sight that was before her eyes, this Italian genius of a robe maker had surpassed any and all expectations she had. Her daughter, Millicent Bulstrode, was beautiful and the proud mother couldn’t contain her tears of wonder and joy.

They’d came in earlier and Hermione had told the woman that Millicent was going to become the youngest ever recipient of the Order of Merlin, first class, and she plus her mother needed something to match the occasion. Glenda wasn’t fooled, it was the Potter name that had the whole shop buzzing round them rather than any award.

They had then went to other shops, the muggle side was out of this world, and she’d even had her hair ‘styled’ but it was their return to the dress shop that found Glenda having to sit down as her wobbly knees threatened to give way.

The garment was almost a combination of a dress and a robe, ivory in colour and made of the finest silk. It had long sleeves but was cut so you could see part of her shoulders and low enough at the front to display some cleavage. It clung to her bust, waist and hips, beautifully emphasising her figure before continuing on down to her ankles with a slit up the side to aid walking as the garment clung to her legs. The

green trim around her neckline sparkled as she moved and on closer inspection was discovered to be emeralds.

Glenda had never seen anything so fine in all her life, it was aristocratic without being ostentatious and made Millicent look elegant and refined. Glenda was then dragged into a changing room where her robe matched her daughters in colour and material but was cut more in keeping with her age, shape and station as mother of the award winner.

Both Bulstrode women stood together in front of a mirror and desperately wanted to hug each other but were afraid to mark these wonderful clothes, little Joan Potter broke the ice.

She handed over a long velvet box, "aunt Millicent you look beautiful, this is for you."

She bent and kissed the girl before opening the box to find a delicate white gold bracelet that was encrusted with emeralds, her hand was shaking so much that Emma had to put it on the girl's wrist.

"Lady Potter, you haven't let me pay for a single thing all day, this is too much!" moaned an amazed Glenda.

"It's still Hermione and it's not too much, and we'll all be there tomorrow night clapping louder than anyone else."

Hermione hugged Millicent; "you know Ron's going to flip when he sees you in that?" The girl's nervous laughter indicated that she was still unsure of the Hermione / Ron dynamic so Mrs Potter tried to put her mind at ease, "the only reason I used to argue with the lazy git is because I could see there was a good wizard in there somewhere, it just needed the right witch to bring it out and I'm pleased he found her."

Hermione could see the beginning of tears in Millicent's eyes so quantified her statement, "I still say your much too good for him though." This had them laughing as Millicent lost the last of her fears while the dress was pronounced finished.

-oOoOo-

Amelia glanced at the gallery and saw Ginny surrounded by those she loved, Joan Potter was practically sitting on her knee; Poppy was on one side of her while Harry and Hermione were on the other. Neville and Luna sat directly behind with both Bill and Charlie in front.

Bill was now the head of the Weasley family as Arthur had been tried earlier and stripped of that right as well as sentenced to a year in prison though he'd already been locked up for a third of that. Charlie was in the country due to his job and had shaken his head in disbelief as the man he once respected had been led out of the chamber earlier, now it was about supporting his sister.

Everyone in the chamber was staring in shock at the wizened old man that had to be helped to the chair and then wrapped in a blanket, only Amelia banging on her gavel got the room settled down again.

"Yes that is Albus Dumbledore and his condition has brought a change to today's proceedings," Amelia now had the attention of everyone. "The healers have advised me that Albus Dumbledore wouldn't even survive the trip to Azkaban and since Lord Potter scared the dementors so badly, they now refuse to leave the island."

There were quite a few noises of derision coming from the members of the Wizengamot over Amelia's claim about the dementors, she had been told part of the story of how the two had used a time turner to save Sirius and wished she could have seen the look on Fudge and Dumbledore's faces.

Any doubts the members had were laid to rest as a large silver stag appeared in the chamber, it strolled up to Tonks and licked her face while Connie was able to stroke its neck. Prongs had just given new meaning to the term 'corpal patronus' and it didn't take too much imagination to envisage what damage those antlers would do to a dementor. Both aurors were becoming weak at the knees with the amount of positive energy that prongs was emitting, the entire

chamber could feel it before the stag winked at Amelia and then vanished.

The silence in the chamber was broken by the voice of a dark haired eight-year-old, "Dad, that was so cool! Can you do a pony?"

Joan found herself engulfed in a hug by her aunts Ginny and Luna though both seemed to be trying to contain their laughter.

Amelia got the Chamber back to order, "so Dumbledore will spend the remainder of his days in a secure ward at St Mungo's, today we are going to put on trial not so much the man but the reputation he'd built himself and see justice dispensed to his accomplices in crime."

She and Shack had carefully prepared the questions they were going to ask so no mention of horcruxes escaped the proceedings, part of the prophecy was bound to leak but since everyone already thought Harry was the chosen one this shouldn't do any damage. With that in mind they were only charging the slug with molesting children as this would ensure at the very least he spent the rest of his life in Azkaban.

The slug was led in and chained to a chair beside Dumbledore before the truth serum was administered, after the first few questions ensured the serum was working properly they got down to the business of slaughtering Slughorn.

"How long have you been abusing the students at Hogwarts?"

"Since the mid 1930's."

Considering that this encompassed the time scale that over half of those in the chamber passed through Hogwarts he would be lucky to get out of here alive.

"How did you stop your victims reporting these actions?"

"I perfected a potion that has the combined effects of an imperius curse and memory charm, they would do what they were told then remember nothing."

Shack had heard the answers before and still wanted to kill this arsehole so he could sympathise with the reactions going on around him, counting his blessings that he hadn't attended Hogwarts he asked the next question.

"Was Albus Dumbledore aware of your activities?"

"Yes."

Pandemonium erupted that was only brought back under control when Connie and Tonks fired off noisemaker spells.

"What did the Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot do about your activities?"

"He blackmailed me to resign so Snape could take over then blackmailed me again to return when Snape was arrested."

"Did you continue your activities upon returning to Hogwarts this September?"

"Yes."

"Was Dumbledore aware of this?"

"Yes, it was used as an enticement to get me to accept a lower salary, I was told there was financial troubles at Hogwarts."

"No further questions," said Shack and as the appointed defence councillor looked ready to murder the slug it was only a matter of sentencing, his guilt was there for all to see. This actually took about thirty minutes longer than the ten Shack expected as they tried to work out what punishment would be worse, spending the rest of his life in Azkaban was eventually settled on.

Snape was next to find himself sitting beside his former headmaster, the precedent had been set so it was soon time to ask the meaningful questions.

“Are you a death eater?”

“Yes”

This answer meant that Snape’s life was already forfeit.

“Did you leave Voldemort’s side?”

“Yes.”

“Why?”

“He’s a psychotic arsehole who’s as likely to murder his own followers as anyone else.”

“You told me it was because you loved Lilly,” croaked Dumbledore

“After she had soiled herself with Potter I wouldn’t touch the mudblood bitch and am glad the dark lord murdered her.”

In the gallery Hermione had hold of her husband and was so glad that the marauders were working at the institute allowing Minerva and Filius to attend. Harry seemed to be sticking to their ‘don’t get mad – get even’ policy but she was positive nothing could have prevented Remus and Sirius from ripping this handless wanker to shreds. Minerva was in tears as the revelations mounted about her former mentor while Filius gave the impression of a Jack Russell terrier that wanted to bite their ankles.

Shack told Dumbledore to be quiet before returning his attention to Snape, “are you aware of a prophecy linking Lord Potter and Voldemort?”

“Yes.”

“How did Voldemort discover this?”

“I told him.”

It took a few minutes for order to be restored as it sunk in that Snape was responsible for the Potter deaths.

“Why was Harry Potter placed with muggle relatives in direct contravention to his parents will?”

“Albus wanted him kept weak and ignorant so the dark lord could easily kill him when he returned.”

Harry was now holding back his wife as pandemonium reigned, Albus Dumbledore wanting the dark lord to murder the chosen one went against everything the magical world believed in.

“Why did Dumbledore want Voldemort to kill Harry?”

“The prophecy said one had to kill the other, when Potter was dead we would then take care of Voldemort and be the heroes of the wizarding world. I would take over as headmaster, then minister when Albus passed away.”

This answer was greeted with total silence as the enormity of their plans unfolded and, more importantly the likelihood of their goals becoming reality had their plan succeeded. With their saviour dead the wizarding world would have been served up on a silver platter to anyone who could save them from Voldemort.

“What happened to Harry’s godparents?”

“Albus used his influence to make sure that Black stayed in Azkaban without a trial while telling the Longbottoms it was now safe to come out of hiding. The fact that it clearly wasn’t and he said so loudly in this chamber to get the Potter documents sealed and the brat hid away was never questioned. Albus can say two opposite things at the same time and people believe him without question because he’s Dumbledore.”

Luna was now wrapped round her betrothed while Neville envisaged using his knife to render Snape into potion ingredients. Snape had long since ceased to be his boggart as Hermione had rendered the greasy git harmless and the young wizard was now far more afraid of anything happening to Luna.

“How did Dumbledore try to have Harry killed?”

“He kept coming up with more and more elaborate plans but the brat and his mudblood always seemed to escape, even when she was petrified the bitch was still helping him. Every time we thought we had them something would come to their aid. We even had them sent into the forbidden forest at night for detention and a bloody centaur saved them from Voldemort.”

Shack administered the antidote, Snape’s admission of being a death eater was enough to see him take a short trip through the veil but he had no intention of going quietly.

“Potter! How does it feel to have your whole life manipulated and any one who ever loved you either dead or lying to you?”

Harry slowly stood as Shack hit Snape with a silencing charm, he found his daughter wanting to be held in his arms while Hermione stood at his side. Dan and Emma were sitting in front of them next to Bill and both rose to their feet, as did Neville, Luna and Ginny. Filius had to stand on a chair to register his support but Minerva, Poppy and the two Weasleys were also on their feet.

“I’m not sure if I should address you as prisoner Snape or Snivillus Squib but, as I have friends that are squibs I’ll just call you a greasy git. To answer your question I feel blessed to stand here with my daughter in my arms, wife at my side, mum and dad in front of me and my brother and sister behind while surrounded by friends and colleges. Remus is happily married to our headmistress and expecting a son while teaching at the best school in Europe. Lord Black is our potions professor whose gathering up his courage to ask a beautiful young woman to marry him though as everyone can see she plainly loves him he’s no reason to worry. All you have in the

world is your hatred for everyone and a bitter, twisted, broken old man to keep you company.”

Harry then addressed the Wizengamot, “I am aware that the punishment for death eaters is the veil, I would like to plead for this case to be awarded life in Azkaban. Living in that hell hole while not even being able to wipe your arse is, I think a more fitting punishment for his crimes than a quick, painless death.”

The vote was instantaneous and unanimous as Snape was led away to join another Hogwarts potions professor in Azkaban, gone was the haughty look or the trademark sneer as the handless death eater was now crying like a two-year-old in a tantrum.

Shack turned to the Wizengamot, “the article that was written by Lord and Lady Potter and appeared in the Quibbler has been found to be correct in every detail. Pettigrew’s body was recovered from where Voldemort murdered him on Halloween and I am one of a select few who have seen the carcass of that Basilisk and the photo just doesn’t do it justice.”

A lot of glances were cast in Harry’s direction with these comments.

“It was also true that while lord Potter was being starved and abused Albus Dumbledore was stealing five thousand galleons every month from the Potter vaults for over twelve years. In this time he formed a relationship with the goblin in charge of the Potter account and was using Sickyle to try and overthrow the goblin government, they have issued a death sentence against Dumbledore and over fifty goblin traitors paid with their lives.”

The Wizengamot wasn’t too bothered about fifty dead goblins but stealing over half a million galleons while a child was being abused was deplorable.

“Dumbledore uses anyone he thinks necessary to achieve his aim including a young man he forced into becoming a defence professor. Oliver Wood had a promising Quidditch career ruined because he has had so many compulsion charms cast on him by Dumbledore

that he has now been left with a nervous twitch that will rule him out of playing professionally. Dumbledore has lied, cajoled, bribed or cursed witches and wizards in his unrelenting quest to be supreme ruler of the magical world, remind you of anyone else?"

While the Wizengamot were digesting this Molly was led into the chamber, she was walking on her own until she spotted the red hair in the gantry and the witch just broke. Her knees gave way and she was wailing like a banshee with the realisation that her greatest fear looked likely to become a reality; although they were alive she was still going to lose every one of her children.

Ginny was sobbing at the sight of a bald Molly as she had to be carried to the chair after glancing in their direction, Shack had to cast a couple of cheering charms on her before she was settled enough for him to administer the truth serum.

After allowing time for the serum to take effect Shack began his questions.

"What was the Weasley involvement in Dumbledore's plans?"

"He wanted Ron to split Harry and Hermione leaving the way clear for Ginny. His plan was then for Ginny to dump Harry just before Albus had arranged a confrontation against Voldemort, he wanted the boy broken and defeated."

"How were you to achieve this?"

"By any means possible, he was going to provide any potions that were required."

"Did you agree with this plan?"

"I agreed to go along with it but not the plan, Albus wanted him dead but I wanted Harry married to Ginny. I had been pestering him for years to arrange a betrothal contract but we now know he never had the power he claimed to have and was not Harry's legal guardian."

“How did you come to be arrested?”

“I lost my temper and pulled my wand on a muggle, when she defeated me I tried to use a pureblood law to break lord Potter’s betrothal.”

Shack didn’t see there was anything further to be gained with the questioning and gave the antidote.

Amelia spoke to Harry, “lord Potter could I ask if you have anything to say on this situation before we consider sentencing?”

Harry was watching Ginny receive hugs from everyone around her as the tears streamed down her face, “Minister my main concern here is for my friend Ginny Pomfrey, I think seeing Molly Weasley handed a long sentence or Dementors kiss would be detrimental to her recovering from the ordeals inflicted by her former parents. I would be satisfied if she received the same sentence as her husband with the proviso that she wasn’t allowed to contact any of her children after her release, they of course may contact her if they wish.”

Ginny suddenly had her arms round Harry and was sobbing into his chest as he held the young witch and tried to offer words of comfort. This more than anything influenced the Wizengamot and Harry got his way, Molly Weasley was going to be living in Azkaban until next summer.

Bill Weasley didn’t become a Gringotts curse breaker by being stupid, his parents had just been given an unbelievable easy ride through the court and he couldn’t help but think that the young wizard currently with his arms round his sister had something to do with it. There was no mention of the Weasley greed that had caused so much heartache for the Potters and if his suspicions were correct, Harry had not only saved his two youngest siblings but his parents as well, at least he knew Ginny appreciated it. The Weasley family had already been deeply indebted to this young wizard before acquiring this latest round of debts but had treated him deplorably, a mistake the new head of the Weasley family would be doing everything in his power to atone for.

Amelia then used her memory of Dumbledore's attack in the great hall to be projected for all to see, the viewing of it left a sickening taste in everyone's mouth. The supposed leader of the light using a spell designed to maim and kill in a hall full of children destroyed any shred of doubt that might have been lingering in people's minds.

Unfortunately it was here that all the minister's carefully laid plans unravelled as outraged members of the Wizengamot demanded that Dumbledore explain what the hell he had been playing at, they were baying for blood and not about to settle for anything less than hearing directly from their former chief.

Shacks and Amelia were desperate that news of horcruxes not leak from this trial, it would have been better waiting until after Voldemort was vanquished but the healers were reducing his life expectancy twice daily and she couldn't get any of them who could say with any conviction that the old goat would still be alive next week. They had never seen or even heard of a case like this, because of Dumbledore's age his magic had been a big part of keeping him alive but now he didn't have any his body was starting to shut down piece by piece.

Albus had been slipping in and out of the trial as he now found it incredibly hard to concentrate for prolonged periods but the chance of being the centre of attention again seemed to invigorate the old goat as he got his final chance to screw them all over, he was Albus Dumbledore and they should never have questioned his decisions.

Gone was the twinkle from his eyes and his voice was weak but the spoken words caused mayhem, "Madam Minister, members of the Wizengamot I realise my behaviour seems odd at best and in some cases extreme but you are not in possession of all the facts. Anything I have done has been for the greater good of the wizarding world because, as much as we would wish otherwise, Harry Potter has to die before Voldemort can be defeated as he has a part of the dark lord's soul in his head. It was involuntary placed there the night he received his famous scar."

Every pair of eyes in the chamber quickly shifted from Dumbledore to Harry with Ginny now sobbing for a different reason, only the group that knew the full story were aware it had been removed and Harry had a crying Joan to deal with as well.

“Madam Minister do you have anyway of testing these claims, please forgive me if I don’t accept the word of a man who’s lied to me my entire life.” Harry passed Ginny over to Poppy as the three Potters made their way to the centre of the court chamber as Joan point blank refused to release the hold on her dad. Anyone wanting to kill her dad was going to have to kill her as well because she wasn’t giving him up for anything, and from the way mum held on to both of them Joan knew she felt the same.

After about ten minutes where Hermione really struggled not to hex the smug expression off Dumbledore’s wrinkled mug an unspeakable arrived with what looked like a silver tube and Amelia explained what was about to happen.

“This is a rare instrument that is used to determine that a person’s soul has departed after they’ve been administered a dementors kiss. It will also show if more than one soul inhabits a body.”

Harry kissed his daughter before putting her down and her mum whispered in her ear, “remember darling, nothing bad will ever happen to us as long as your dad’s here.”

The unspeakable activated the instrument and a silver cloud formed in front of Harry, as it split in two Dumbledore’s shout of triumph was easily eclipsed by Ginny’s scream of terror for her friend. The rest of the chamber collectively held their breath as one part of the cloud formed a miniature prongs while the other took the shape of an otter and swam around Hermione.

As the clouds faded Harry spoke to the unspeakable, “could you carry out the same test on the Lady Potter please?”

A quick affirmation from Amelia and the test was performed; the results were the same with miniature prongs galloping over to Harry while Hermione's otter seemed to enjoy playfully teasing Joan.

It was only when Hermione released her patronus and the silver otter glided through the chamber causing Joan to chuckle that light dawned on the unspeakable, "you're soul bound?"

"Yes my wife and I are soul bound and were shown our entry in the book of souls by the minister of magic. Were the results obtained conducive to those circumstances?"

The unspeakable's whole attitude changed, "yes lord Potter there is no sign whatsoever of any other soul present apart from your bond with lady Potter."

Joan sprang back into her dad's arms and had both arms wrapped tightly round his neck in relief while they headed back to their seats, as they walked passed a dumfounded Dumbledore Harry leaned in and whispered, "told you old man, three steps ahead of you at every turn."

As the Potters were walking away Albus shakily got to his feet and started screaming at them, "You insolent, ungrateful, ignorant little shit! I hope Voldemort kills you and your mudblood bitch..."

Dumbledore's complexion matched anything that Vernon Dursley had managed to achieve over the years but Vernon, though grossly overweight wasn't a one hundred and fifty year old former wizard. While Harry always thought his uncle Vernon would drop down dead as his temper pushed his blood pressure through the roof, the greatest wizard of the age being killed by a temper tantrum was just a bit much.

Albus Wulfric Percival Brian Dumbledore had a blood vessel burst in his head, the puppet master collapsed like a marionette who'd just had his strings severed and died before the healers could do more than cast diagnostic scans. After today's hearing there would be no state funeral or crypt on the grounds of Hogwarts, considering his

crimes and complete lack of finances he would receive a lonely pauper's cremation.

As the Potters left the chamber Harry unknowingly provided the headline for all tomorrow's newspapers when he turned to Hermione and said, "one dark lord down, one more to go."

-oOoOo-

Bella's mood was as dark as her maiden name; she'd been tasked with getting that goblet and used that as an excuse to give a certain squirrel the slip. She might have been sleeping rough for the past few nights but at least she was able to sleep with both eyes closed instead of one eye open for the rodent Romeo. No left arm also meant no dark mark so he couldn't trace her while she struggled with the hardest decision of her life.

More years ago than she cared to remember Bella had pledged her life, body and magic to her lord, that furry creature bore no resemblance to her master but if the goblet recognised the squirrel as Riddle then she had to be careful. Magical oaths don't contain any small print, escape clauses or leave room for interpretation, if magic thought the horny hoarder was her master then she was walking a tightrope that could cost Bella her life.

Bella had been given a direct order to try and get the goblet to save the squirrel and she would have to do enough to satisfy her magical oath preferably without getting herself killed, she had no intention of losing her life in the service of the squirrel.

Her best option would appear to acquire some hostages to exchange for the goblet but with what was at stake they would have to be someone connected to Potter or Bones otherwise they would just be acceptable casualties of war. The problem was the death eaters had left Bones with only one family member who was currently out the country along with Potter and everyone close to him. Bella would love to get her wand on the bitch that put steak off the menu for her but Bones had Hogwarts crawling with aurors and made sure everyone knew they were there.

Bella drank down a potion that she didn't recognise not caring of the effects, she had just grabbed everything she could lay her hand on when she high-tailed it away from the Squirrel and was now down to her last remaining few.

The last death eater in Britain decided that fate was going to have a major part to play in this, she would try and get as close to Hogwarts as possible and see what came her way. If fate decided to land something right in her lap then who was she to question that, if not then the squirrel would be pushing up daisies and Bella just hoped she would still be alive to piss on his grave.

A/N thanks for reading and especially to those of you who take the time to review, I really do appreciate it.

Chapter 29

As the Potters were leaving the ministry Bill and Charlie asked for a quiet word, "Harry I know I can never make up for the harm that the Weasley family have inflicted on you but I would like to start by offering you both some help with the first task tomorrow."

Harry held his hand up to forestall any revelations, "Bill I really appreciate the offer but I wouldn't like anyone to think I was cheating," Harry had to pause as Hermione's silent laughter was ringing in his head. "Let me just assume that Charlie here isn't in Britain purely for a visit and we'll take it from there."

The smile on both Weasley faces told Harry he'd judged it right, the Potters already knew what the first task entailed but the two red heads now thought they had been some help and would go away happy.

It was Joan, still in Harry's arms that spoke, "Dad, we need to go talk to uncle Neville."

They had both wondered if Joan had some empathic abilities, as she always seemed to know when someone needed a hug and was an excellent reader of people. Her instant close friendship with Millicent yet continued distrust of Ron was only the latest examples.

They found Neville and Luna trying in vain to console a sobbing Augusta Longbottom; the woman's whole world had been shattered by the revelations in the court. "How could Dumbledore do that to my Frank and Alice?" She noticed the Potters, "Your mum and dad were as close to them as you four are with each other, they would have raised you as brothers and loved you both equally. That bastard stole so much from all of us and may he burn in hell for eternity."

The three girls were attempting to comfort the distraught witch as Harry pulled Neville into a corner.

"Nev I need you to be the head of your house for a few hours," Neville looked shocked that Harry would even suggest something like that but Harry continued, "your gran is in no state to make any

decisions and my instincts are telling me the time is now. Voldemort probably knew more about the arts of the mind than any other wizard and all that information is in my head, we've had mum, dad and Poppy searching for months and their research has helped us refine our plan. We were hoping to make an attempt to help them as soon as Riddle was dealt with but my gut is telling me to do it now."

"Anything you need, all that I have is yours. If you can do this I might even have to dump Luna and marry you!" Neville had Harry in a bear hug as Luna waltzed over.

"If you get to marry Harry does that mean it's me and Hermione?" The boy's laughter enabled them to wipe their eyes without embarrassing each other though Harry soon had everyone in tears as he knelt in front of Augusta.

While holding her hand he spoke with such emotion that his aura was visible by the time he was finished, "when we bought the six houses in Italy I was being totally selfish, one is ours and one for mum and dad, Remus and Pomona were gifted one as a wedding present as will Sirius and Amber. The fifth house will be our wedding present to Luna and Neville because I want to live my life surrounded by my family. There is one house left and it's for my godmother, we're going over to St Mungo's to try and convince her to join us. Uncle Frank is of course welcome to."

Augusta was confused until Harry almost made her heart explode, "We think we might be able to help them and Neville has granted us permission to try."

The old witch had to be helped out the room by her grandson and his betrothed as she'd just had one shock too many today, they walked over to the group who were waiting for them.

Charlie and Bill were chatting to Ginny but the dragon handler had to excuse himself, citing he'd left the twins at Hogwarts and the other handlers might have fed them to a particularly nasty Norwegian Ridgeback by now.

Hermione asked her husband over their bond if it was because Charlie was a dragon handler that his hint had all the finesse of a piano dropping on your head or if it was just the case that all the Weasley's were incapable of subtlety. Bill promised to let Gringotts know they might be late for their meeting as he also headed back to work.

Dan, Emma and Poppy had all been involved in the discussions regarding what they were going to attempt so were definitely accompanying them while Minerva and Filius decided they also wanted to be included. Counting Ginny there was now twelve of them who set off to St Mungo's.

-oOoOo-

The receptionist on the desk at St Mungo's was well aware she shouldn't let these twelve people into ward 49 but who could say no to Harry Potter? She certainly couldn't and had no intention of replying in the negative to ANYTHING he asked of her, the witches hand trembled as she personally pinned his visitors badge to his robes, taking as long as she dared and as many liberties as she thought she could get away with.

Joan was just itching to let this woman feel her right shoe impacting with her bony ankle but had been warned by her mother they needed to get into this room so dad would be laying on the charm a bit thick. When her dad took the jezebel's hand off his chest and kissed the back of it Joan had to be physically restrained by her granddad from attacking the harlot.

The receptionist didn't even notice the glares coming from the little girl as the entire party filed past her, she was in a fantasy world that had those lips kissing her body in ever decreasing circles as they made their way slowly to their intended target. The corridor had been empty for over ten minutes and she was still standing there with shudders running through her body.

Neville took his mother by the hand and led her back to bed, Augusta had finally got her brain cells communicating with each other, "Lord Potter are they in any danger from this?"

“This procedure won’t cause them any harm at all.”

Poppy’s sigh alerted everyone that they weren’t being told the full truth, “What Harry is going to attempt is to enter their minds and try to locate their consciousness, this procedure has never harmed a patient but quite a few healers who have attempted it have lost themselves and been unable to return. The procedure was discontinued as the risks were judged to far outweigh any gains.”

“Harry, I appreciate the offer but I can’t let you take that risk,” said a shocked Neville.

Harry tried to reassure everyone, “you all saw the evidence today that Hermione and I are soul bound, she will be my anchor, my beacon to lead me home. All research shows that making contact is only half the battle as I have to convince them to leave their sanctuary and the longer it’s been since the trauma the harder it will be.”

Hermione showed her husband had her full backing by explaining the rest of the plan, “When Harry has made contact we have to use our patronus to generate an atmosphere of safety and love to encourage their return. Hopefully we will still be able to communicate and get our timing right.”

Luna drew her wand and kissed Neville before practicing her patronus, an Old English sheepdog padded around the room. Hermione couldn’t help but think how apt that was, an intelligent lively animal who was extremely loyal and protected her herd.

Neville’s was a bear and Ginny kissed Harry on the cheek before a sword-wielding knight astride a white charger galloped around the room for a few seconds, not one person there was surprised that the knight bore a remarkable likeness to Harry. Joan now understood about the patronus charm and couldn’t help but think hers would be along the lines of her aunt Ginny’s, her dad on a horse was a powerful image but she didn’t understand the sword.

Harry was sitting beside the bed with his eyes closed, concentrating on what he had to do when a familiar weight settle in his lap and a small pair of arms encircled his chest. A whispered "come back to us dad" was followed by a kiss on the cheek as he silently said the incantation.

Harry was in a very strange environment, he found himself completely surrounded by white bed sheets that were about eight feet tall. He imagined this would be the result of some advertising executive that had been given Persil detergent to try, and instead of putting it in the washing machine had spent all night snorting the white powder. To make matters worse the sheets were blowing in a wind that constantly changed direction. His sense of disorientation was causing him to start panicking until he felt the calming presence of his wife.

It was similar to talking with Amelia on the mobile from Italy, there seemed to be a slight delay, which felt really weird, as Hermione and he had got so used to flashing memories, messages and ideas to one another instantaneously now that they did it all the time without even noticing. He recognised this as some type of maze and Hermione asked if he had his wand there with him, guessing where she was going with this he drew it and placed it flat on his hand.

"Point me Alice Longbottom."

His wand span around in circles for a minute or so before settling down and giving a positive indication to the right of where he was standing, having no better clue he followed the direction his wand was pointing.

After edging his way through the maze and repeated castings of the 'point me' spell Harry was beginning to contemplate cutting curses followed by reparo charms to make his way through the sheets, Hermione's loud 'NO!' startled him so much he nearly dropped his wand.

"Harry we have no idea what damage using a cutting curse would do, you're in someone's mind."

Harry soldiered on trying to solve the craziest maze ever invented using the spell his wife discovered for the tri-wiz maze, he was starting to worry as all sense of time had long gone. The only indication that he was venturing deeper into the maze was the increased delay in contact with Hermione.

Harry moved a sheet and came upon a young round-faced woman who was sitting at her dressing table, running a brush through her luscious brown hair in front of a vanity mirror. This image appeared about fifty years younger than the Alice Longbottom he'd seen Neville leading by the arm, the sparse grey hair and clapped in cheeks had prematurely aged the poor witch who'd yet to reach her fortieth birthday.

Just one more reason to take down Bellatrix Lestrange, Alice dropped her brush when she noticed Harry's image appearing in her mirror, "Who are you? Where's my Frank and Neville?"

Back in the real world Joan was wiping sweat off her dad's brow, it was now over half an hour since he'd went into a trance, when she took a sharp intake of breath, "He's found her!"

It was almost ten seconds later before Hermione could confirm the news; Joan seemed able to read emotions from Alice as well as her dad and may prove a quicker link. Hermione was struggling to remain in contact with Harry and the real world at the same time.

Harry could see she was very anxious and could understand that reaction, time didn't seem to have any meaning in here so he was trying to prepare for her shock when learning that thirteen years had passed since she last saw her husband or son.

Harry took a deep breath to steady his nerves, "Hello Alice, I'm Harry Potter and my best friend Neville Longbottom asked me to fetch his mum, my godmother so she could meet his beautiful betrothed."

The fear in her eyes was plain to see as she stuttered, "Where's my Frank?"

Harry sat down crossed legged, trying to make himself look as unthreatening as possible. "I really don't know how to tell you this so I'll just come right out and say it. You're currently in a bed in St Mungo's where you've been for the last thirteen years, I'm in your mind trying to bring you back to Neville, and Frank is in the same condition and lying in the bed next to you."

This information floored this version of Alice Longbottom as she struggled with what that would mean, "Why didn't you try Frank first?"

Harry got the impression she was stalling for time, "What would have happened if I'd woke uncle Frank first? When he came round and saw you lying there he would have kicked my arse for not waking you first. When he wakes you have to be sitting there waiting on him or I would never hear the end of it." He had no memories of the Longbottoms but it just sounded right.

Alice almost smiled as this young man had described perfectly how her husband would react, "I would like to leave here but I don't know how, and I'm frightened."

Harry tried to offer reassurance, basically he would tell Alice anything to get her out of here and she could shout at him later if she liked. "Things have changed a lot since you've been here, Neville and his betrothed, Luna Lovegood are very powerful and together with my wife and I have wiped out the death eaters."

Joan was concentrating before saying, "Now, it has to be now!"

Remus had insisted the group learn the charm but could never have foreseen the use his students would put it to, Neville thought of actually being able to talk to his parents and his patronus literally had his mother in a bear hug. Luna used the memory of Neville asking for her hand and a Old English sheepdog was licking her future mother-in-law's face, Hermione just needed the memory of being in bed with her husband last night and the silver otter was swimming over Alice's legs. Ginny had the most trouble with perfecting her patronus, flying or Quidditch memories just didn't cut it, the memory of Harry bringing Bill to the Institute because of her nightmares was such a wonderful thing for a friend to do that she refused to be embarrassed by her

form. Harry Potter was Ginny Pomfrey's knight in shining armour so what other form could her protection from evil take. Her knight added to the positive energy that was radiating around Alice Longbottom.

Alice was glowing as she asked Harry what was happening. "That's your son and his betrothed casting their patronus charms to guide us home."

Harry could see his godmother was desperate to leave but was still hesitating, her last experience before retreating to here was excruciating pain that she never wanted to experience again. "I want to believe you but what if it's a trap?"

Harry could sense it was now or never and he would have to take whatever risk he thought necessary, "You knew my dad was an animagus?" he asked.

Her nod led to the appearance of prongs and she couldn't take her eyes off the stag.

Alice whispered "James!" as the sheets began to disappear revealing a door that prongs shepherded the hesitant witch towards, as she walked (was pushed by prongs) through the door Harry vanished, regaining his body.

Harry couldn't remember ever feeling this exhausted in his life, he was both physically and magically drained. The fact that he and his wife were back on the same instantaneous wavelength brought a smile to his face though he was aware that Hermione was just as cream crackered as he was. Joan was still residing on his lap while Ginny and Emma holding on to him were the only reasons he was still upright in his chair. Hermione had her dad and Luna helping her as she had been feeding power to Harry over their bond and was now more than ready to just curl up with her husband and spend the next twenty four hours asleep.

The sound of sobbing interrupted their mental checking of each other as they both glanced over to see that Neville had replaced his patronus in having his mother in a bear hug, a hug that was being returned for the first time since the young wizard was a toddler.

For the second time in a matter of hours the sobbing was coming from Augusta Longbottom but this time it had a very different timbre as her greatest wish was coming true right in front of her eyes. One look at the Potters and it was patently obvious that her son wouldn't be returning to them today but she was a patient witch, she'd waited thirteen years so another few days should be easy. It would also give her grandson time to get to know his mother before finally being able to speak with his father.

There was not one shred of doubt in her mind that the Potters would be able to bring her Frank back to them, they had just destroyed one man who thought he was a god and tomorrow would put an end to another who strived desperately to become one. Augusta thought if any being could ever attain that goal it would be these unassuming teens, fortunately all they wanted was to be left alone to be with their friends and family which the elderly witch considered goals worthy of any gods.

Poppy was being foiled from performing diagnostic scans because of all the other bodies in the way, Neville didn't appear to have any intention of letting his mother go any time soon. Joan and Ginny were hugging Harry while Emma held him by the shoulders; Hermione had a crying Luna hugging her while her father supported his daughter as she tried to recover from her exertions.

Poppy would also have had a great deal of trouble reading the results as tears streaming out your eyes was not conducive to analysing complicated results. A much younger Poppy Pomfrey had danced at the weddings of the Longbottoms and the Potters and had been the presiding healer at both Neville and Harry's births. She was also the only person in the room who realised the enormity of what the Potters had went through to accomplish the miracle that she'd witnessed here today.

All her years of dealing with children told her that the six in this room were an exceptional group, putting your life in someone else's hands creates a bond that reaches beyond magic. This group had performed that feat for each other multiple times with even Joan being saved in Argentina and the great hall of Hogwarts, the little

witch was ready to face any fate that court handed out today rather than move away from her father. Poppy reckoned you would need a muggle computer to accurately work out the life debts shared out amongst them, her Ginny alone owed three that she knew of.

Dobby and Winky popped in with the Elvin brew that was better than any pepper up potion available in St Mungo's and it had an immediate effect on both Potters, Poppy was then able to move the others out of the way to perform her scans, quickly establishing that other than being exhausted both Potters had a clean bill of health. Luna managed to get Neville to release his mother long enough for Poppy to examine her, the healers suggested course of treatment that required Alice to get some sun, good food and be surrounded by her family was whole heartedly endorsed by everyone.

The six-way huddle that commenced in the centre of the room by the youngsters left the adults feeling superfluous as the six seemed to be communicating their feelings silently, they were now so close that words sometimes got in the way. The gratitude of Neville and Luna didn't need them nor did the love of Ginny and Joan have to be spoken. Neville then proudly led the group over to his mother's bed.

"Mum this is Luna, my betrothed. You've met Harry and this is his wife Hermione with their daughter Joan and our best friend Ginny Pomfrey. You know Minerva, Filius and Poppy with the two at the end being Dan and Emma Granger, Hermione's parents."

Alice hadn't taken her eyes off Harry as her mouth tried to form words for the first time in over a decade, Winky reappeared with a goblet and asked Poppy's permission to administer the potion to Alice, with a nod the healer confirmed her absolute trust in the elves. After taking the potion Alice Longbottom regained a bit of colour in her cheeks before managing to croak "Thanks Harry!" Her glance shifted to the bed next to her as the man who was her husband lay there with no interest whatsoever in what was happening around him.

"You're very welcome aunt Alice, I'm afraid my wife and I are exhausted and will need a day or two to recover before making an attempt with uncle Frank."

Dobby re-entered the room, "Harry Potter sir, Director Ragnok has postponed your proposed meeting till nine tomorrow morning, he advised you rest until then."

Hermione couldn't help it, "that wouldn't have been at your suggestion by any chance, would it Dobby?"

Harry's laughter at the now blushing elf was quickly followed by, "Dobby you are the best, and Winky you're a very close second. Our day is now free until the ceremony tonight and I for one intend to spend that time in bed with my wife."

"Slightly TMI there son," joked Dan.

Harry was getting the hang of this family thing and revelling in it so joked right back, "Dad I'm so tired that you'll just have to wait until another day for more grandchildren."

Hermione decided to join in, "I just may have to trade you in for a younger, more athletic model Potter." Her witty quip was kind of spoiled by the rather large yawn she performed in the middle of it.

"What about Frank?" Alice croaked though her voice was slightly stronger this time.

"We'll take you both back with us," Neville declared.

"Can we do that?" asked Minerva, "We needed Harry to cause a distraction so we could sneak in here, I don't think they'll be too pleased if we make off with a couple of their patients."

Alice's eyes nearly popped out her head as she watched Harry remove a device from his pocket and start talking to someone inside it, "Hi Amelia, we're currently at St Mungo's where we managed to coax Alice Longbottom to come back and join us. We want to take the both of them with us to the Institute and I thought I'd better check with you before some bureaucratic arsehole tries to hit us with kidnapping charges...Amelia? She hung up!"

The words were no sooner out his mouth when Amelia came barrelling through the doors, abruptly stopping when, instead of the usual dead eyes that greeted all her previous visits she was confronted by her former auror smiling at her.

“Hello Amelia, you head of the DMLA yet?”

Even hard-nosed Amelia Bones had tears in her eyes, “It’s so good to hear your voice again Alice and actually I’m minister of magic, thanks to this godson of yours.” She turned to the couple, “Harry, Hermione please don’t take this the wrong way but you both look like shit!”

“You should have seen them before they got some elvin pick-me-up,” Poppy chimed in.

Harry chuckled, “that’s what I love about you Amelia, you always call it as you see it. We want to take them both home with us, it’ll be a few days before we’re fit enough to make an attempt with Frank but I don’t want them poked and prodded by healers who’ve ignored them for so many years.”

Amelia spoke directly to Alice and asked jokingly, “Do you really want to leave with these reprobates?”

Alice took Neville’s hand, “More than anything in the world I want to get to know my son and this beautiful girl who’s joining our family.”

Amelia had expected no other answer, “As far as I’m concerned that deals with any legal stuff. I’m assuming from the state of you two this is another situation where it wouldn’t matter if our healers were to observe the procedure as they wouldn’t have the power required to carry it out.”

Hermione nodded, “Harry lost all sense of time and contact with his body, he had no idea how much power it was taking to do what he was trying. Casting your patronus while in someone else’s mind was instinctively brilliant love but almost drained both of us. Without our

bond even Harry wouldn't have had the power to pull it off and might not have made it back."

Harry lovingly kissed his wife then addressed the elves, "Dobby, Winky can you arrange to get everyone back to the institute?"

The elves once again put their own interpretation on their instructions, "Just as soon as we get you both home and into bed," answered Dobby while both elves took the Potters and popped to Italy.

Everything was quiet until Alice commented, "there must have been some amount of changes because I've never seen elves that dressed or acted like that."

"Those are two special elves," answered Amelia.

"They have to be," said Luna so softly that they almost had to strain to hear, "because the people they look after are just about the most special couple you're ever likely to meet."

There was not one person in the room that disagreed with the blond witch.

-oOoOo-

Hermione awoke to find herself wrapped around her husband and thought she could quite happily stay here forever. Since they were dressed in their usual bedtime attire of nothing at all she could tell from Harry's reaction that he thought it was an outstanding idea.

Unfortunately they both chickened out at the thought of telling Joan she wouldn't see her aunt Millicent tonight and Minerva might need some back-up while breaking into her old office in Hogwarts. Dad's joke about her being a cat burglar had been one of his better attempts at humour but unfortunately his audience at the time had consisted of wizards and witches who hadn't a clue what he was talking about, his grouse about wizarding wit though had everyone laughing which just pissed him off more.

They were going to have to settle for a shower though she was pleased that this also drew a reaction from Harry, it was nice to see his energy levels were on the up.

-oOoOo-

Graham Bulstrode thought his chest would burst from the pride he felt for his family, his wife was on his arm as their daughter with her betrothed walked in front of them while the entire great hall of Hogwarts was on it's feet cheering for Millicent.

He noticed that neither his wife or daughter paid any attention to the dignitaries who were waiting for them at the top table but instead concentrated on the group at the end of the Gryffindor table which currently had a young black haired child bouncing up and down on top of it from excitement.

They had barely taken their reserved seats when the minister rose and approached the podium.

"I am aware it's customary for the presentation and speeches to take place after the feast but we're breaking with that tradition tonight so the young lady being honoured can get it out of the way and enjoy her meal."

This drew a few laughs from the hall.

"At Halloween both Millicent and her betrothed Ronald Weasley were kidnapped by a death eater while visiting Hogsmead. Miss Bulstrode awoke to find herself bound, without a wand and in the middle of a graveyard. Hearing cries as her betrothed underwent torture she firstly freed herself then looked for a weapon, using the branch of a tree she firstly killed the magically enhanced poisonous snake that was Voldemort's familiar before seriously injuring Bellatrix Lestrange. Freeing her unconscious betrothed she proceeded to carry him away from there while being pursued by Lord Voldemort himself. The courage and fortitude this young witch displayed that night more than earned her the right to become the youngest ever

recipient of our nation's premier award, The Order of Merlin – First Class!"

The hall erupted in cheering as Millicent made her way forward and had her medal placed round her neck by the minister before being invited to say a few words.

Millie took a deep breath and began her speech, "I feel a bit of a fraud standing here accepting this award but when I mentioned my concerns to Harry he just laughed. He pointed out that I chose to do what was right rather than what was easy, something if I may say he has plenty experience with. I've also noticed when he makes his choices it usually leads to one of two consequences with people either wanting to kill him or kiss his arse, since it would appear that nobody is about to kill me and my arse is already claimed then I should be ok."

The great hall reverberated with laughter and Millie would swear she could feel the heat coming off Ron's blushing face behind her.

"Seriously though I wouldn't be standing here now if Lord Potter's party hadn't turned up at that precise moment and blasted that demented squirrel tit over tail to allow us to escape. Circumstances have conspired against them receiving the awards they so richly deserve, not least of which is the fact that they are now all Italian citizens but if I may I would like to accept this award on behalf of everyone who was in that graveyard and fighting against the dark side that night."

The applause was thunderous and continued for about five minutes with only Millicent's pleading restoring order to the hall.

"This award comes with a cheque for five thousand galleons which I feel unable to accept, instead I would like the gold to be donated to the Granger Foundation to aid with the construction of the new orphanage as both my betrothed and I wish to help these children any way we can."

Ron shot to his feet but this was not the boy of a few months ago who would have been ranting about throwing gold away, this Ron was applauding her decision like a maniac with tears running unashamedly down his cheeks with the pride he felt for his Millie.

After the feast Millicent introduced her father to the Potter party, Graham was as unsuccessful as his wife in trying to thank lord Potter for everything that he'd done for his family and asking how he could repay the debt of honour owed.

Harry held out his hand, "Mr Bulstrode all I ask is your hand in friendship, there can be no debts of honour amongst friends."

Hermione was trying not to laugh as the sight of Victor Krum with two hangers-on for back-up heading towards the Gryffindor table, it reminded her so much of the ferret and his fawning followers who used to make the same journey with the exact same 'you should be bowing in my presence' attitude.

Victor was not a happy world-renowned seeker, he'd been upstaged just as thoroughly tonight as on his first visit to this blasted school. Didn't these people know that he was the main attraction and automatic centre of attention wherever he went?

He didn't understand how this boy had defeated Dumbledore on his last visit so, following his normal procedure for everything he didn't understand it was filed away in his brain as unimportant. Viktor decided it was time to impose his presence on these proceedings and when he saw Potter talking to the beautiful medal winner the opportunity was too good to pass up.

Hermione's mental warning to her husband about the incoming trouble was balanced with the fact that Amelia, Minerva and Filius had just slipped away to perform their feat of espionage, a small distraction that took everyone's attention away from the missing minister was just what the doctor ordered.

The Bulgarian seeker was supposedly talking to his followers but his voice was deliberately pitched as if he was making an announcement to the whole hall, which is exactly what he was doing.

“You know it always amazes me how beautiful girls seem to attach themselves to losers.”

The sound from Ron's mind was almost audible as his hero crashed and burned from a 'Wronski Feint' without the aid of a broom from atop the incredibly high pedestal the Quiditch obsessed red head had placed him on.

Hermione though was quick to respond, “It would appear that your unaccompanied presence here belies that hypothesis.”

Victor's confused look went unaided from his companions while the Potters were having a conversation over their bond, “I don't remember him being such a dick the last time?”

Harry supplied the answer, “That's because the last time he had a headmaster looking out for him, a whole school fawning over him and the most beautiful girl in the school as a date for the ball!”

Harry decided to help Krum before he hurt himself trying to work out if he'd been insulted, “Darling you have to remember they come from a school where the headmaster is a cowardly death eater, social niceties and polite conversation won't be high up in their curriculum.”

Even Krum recognised the sarcastic comment as an insult but Harry continued before he could say anything.

“What my beautiful wife was trying to explain to you morons is that your theory on beautiful women can't be true since you three don't have any yet are the biggest losers in the hall.” Harry got right in Krum's face, “Hermione and I were going to take it easy in the competition as we don't need more fame or gold but the thought of children admiring a wanker like you is unacceptable to us so you're going to be exposed for the mediocre wizard that you are.”

One of Victor's friends proved that his brain cell count actually reached double figures by grabbing the seekers arm as he tried to draw his wand on Harry; Krum was left with just a closing threat to try

and restore some credibility to his tarnished public image. “Just watch your back Potter!”

This declaration of intent was rapidly accompanied by a rather loud double click as Victor found himself staring down the barrel of a pump action shotgun from the distance of about six inches.

Emma’s voice left no room for any doubt, “Watching his back is my job sonny, you make a move on it and I’ll cut you in half. If you sneak around trying to ambush my family I will have no hesitation in killing you.”

His two companions pulled a white faced Victor away from the confrontation; as soon as they turned round a little wandless magic from Hermione left three sets of Bulgarian butt cheeks on display for the whole hall to see. The riotous laughter that greeted the sight of their bare nether regions was the perfect cover for their team to slip back into the hall, they were smiling for a much more noble reason though Hermione noticed that it didn’t stop Amelia and Minerva checking the Bulgarians out.

Graham Bulstrode couldn’t believe his eyes, a muggle woman had made a famous pureblood wizard perform a humiliating climb down then her daughter completed the rout by vanishing part of their clothing without needing a wand, just who were these people?

Ron seemed to read his mind, “Brilliant but scary, both mother and daughter!”

Graham had thought Ron was a selfish asshole but his daughter was clearly in love with the prick so for her sake he’d tried to make the best of it, the young man appeared to have done a bit of growing up recently though facing death could have that effect. He was listening as the young girl called his daughter ‘aunt Millicent’ and chatting away as if they were close family, “Your former friends are really something,” he said to Ron.

“Yea and I owe them a major apology but I need to work out just how big an asshole I’ve been before I’m ready for that. They’ll never forgive me and I can’t blame them for that, the best I can hope for is

to be tolerated because they like Millie. She and Joan get on so well and I can see Millie working for the Potters when she's older, those children from the orphanage made a big impression on us both."

Graham thought there might be hope for this young wizard but like fathers the world over his opinion matched that of Lady Potter, Millicent was much too good for Ronald Weasley.

Minerva whispered to Harry that it was almost like the book was helping them and wanted to be copied so, having got what they came for they promised Millicent they would see her tomorrow and left for mum and dad's with Minerva, Filius and their precious cargo heading back to the institute.

-oOoOo-

Harry and Hermione were in Gringotts while mum and dad played the proud grandparents and showed Joan the sights of muggle London, though the Gardiner credit cards took a bashing in Hamleys as they bought toys for all the kids.

The Potters had calmed down some since the incident at the Institute and decided to financially destroy just the five ex-governors but make it blatantly obvious what was in store for any one else who decided to go after them. Purebloods tended to put all their eggs in one basket and, as long as it was generating income leave it like that for generations.

When your sole source of gold is printing and Lovegood Press suddenly opens a printing business with the latest equipment and their own newspaper to advertise the fact that their charges are almost half of yours then that river of gold becomes a drip almost overnight.

When that same newspaper then identifies you as one of the people who tried to force sixteen children into a situation where they would lose their magic just so you could retain what little power and influence you had left then 'deep shit' was one of the milder terms for the amount of trouble you were in.

The goblins were very impressed at just how ruthless the Potters were and estimated that their initial outlay would be recovered in about two years then the businesses, suppliers and even land they bought dealing with the five individuals would start returning a profit. This was manna from heaven for the war like creatures, destroying your enemy AND making a profit, they were very happy to be on the same side as the Potters.

Ragnok proposed looking at just how much it would cost to gain control of some of the key areas of wizarding life then if the Potters were threatened in the future they would have the means already in place to bring magical Britain to it's financial knees.

The goblins were aware that there was no innovation in magical Britain, the idea of something new being able to do a job better, quicker and cheaper was an alien concept to the purebloods who controlled their society. Investing in the future didn't really apply when you were living about a century in the past.

-oOoOo-

The morning had been good for them but now it was time to put their game faces on, standing in Hogsmead awaiting a portkey bringing the rest of their party here from Italy. They had deliberated over allowing students to attend finally deciding that the ones who had taken an oath that morning in the great hall could accompany them, Cedric wasn't being allowed anywhere near Hogwarts until after Riddle was dead.

It was a beautiful late autumnal day in Hogsmead with the Scottish air so clear you could see for miles, but with the usual deceptive chill that ate into the marrow of your bones. The Institute had purchased heavy winter cloaks for everyone attending and had them made in navy blue so they wouldn't stand out just as much in the crowd though their distinctive snowy owl logo proclaimed to everyone who they were. Living on the Amalfi Coast left them freezing in what the locals would consider nothing more than 'a lovely fresh day,' neither Potter was looking forward to swimming in that bloody freezing lake for the next task.

A portkey delivered the fourteen students, Pomona, Remus, Sirius and Amber right in front of the Potters and Grangers, the eight were suited up for battle under their cloaks and the party made it's way to Hogwarts.

Harry saw the danger coming hurtling towards him but couldn't do a thing about it, when a half-giant decides you need a hug the only options available are to grin and bear it. Only Hermione's introduction of their daughter saved Harry's ribs as Hagrid kneeled down to talk to Joan and was immediately wrapped round her finger, she spent the rest of the journey sitting on Hagrid's shoulder as he pointed to various things and told her stories of her parents but it was when he mentioned showing her some unicorn fawns that Harry knew these two would be friends for life.

There were lots of good-luck hugs and kisses as the party made its way to their reserved seats in the stands while Neville and Luna refused to leave them, following Harry and Hermione to the tent that had been set up for the competitors. There was a ring of aurors around the tent but none of them fancied telling any of these kids what to do, memories of their ministry demonstration was still fresh in most of their minds. A couple more good luck kisses and both Potters entered the tent with their friends standing guard outside, if there was going to be trouble the four of them wanted to be able to get together as quickly as possible.

Inside the tent they quickly eyed-up the opposition, Victor was still seething from last night, Fleur seemed caught between attempting to flirt with Harry and worrying about what awaited them in the arena which gave the witch a constipated expression that both Potters were sure was not her intention. Bole on the other hand was as green as his robes, the Slytherin beater was clearly 'bricking it.'

When the officials entered with a bag for them to draw their dragons, their comment of 'ladies first' saw Fleur push Hermione out her way and try to get to the bag, she found herself unable to move though and a voice filled with menace whispered in her ear, "Unlike you, my wife actually is a Lady!"

Hermione chose first, getting a Welsh Green wearing number three before Harry released the French girl to allow Fleur to choose her dragon.

Harry drew a Hebridean Black wearing number one and was now anxious to get this show on the road though he did notice that the Hungarian Horntail hadn't come out the bag so that meant Tommy boy was number six with the nastiest dragon, poor dark lord just couldn't seem to catch a break.

When Harry's name was called he shared a kiss with Hermione then strode out into the arena, scanning the crowd he quickly spotted the Institute group with Joan waving madly and Amber on the mobile to Italy, providing commentary for those who couldn't make it. The dragon was in the far corner of the arena, eyes constantly searching for danger as she protected her eggs.

The crowd were waiting to see how Harry would tackle this challenge but none were prepared for what they saw in front of them, Harry conjured a fifteen-foot toad, bedecked in a pink fluffy cardigan and bearing more than a passing resemblance to a certain Madam Umbridge. Any adult in the audience who'd ever met the vile woman was now rolling about laughing and when the creature shot its tongue out to hit the surprised dragon on the snout the rest of the audience joined in with the laughter.

The toad repeated the process and the dragon moved to take a more aggressive stance, its body language understandable to every living creature with a brain – 'do that again and I'll rip your head off!'

This was exactly what the toad was waiting for though and as its tongue shot out again it missed the dragon completely but snagged the now exposed golden egg, one second it was on the nest and the next the toad had it in its mouth. Its tongue shot out one final time to deposit the egg straight into Harry's hand just before the enraged dragon pounced on the giant conjured amphibian.

The poor dragon received another shock though when, with the noise of a fifteen-foot Whoopee cushion being sat on by a dragon the toad rapidly shrank in size until it was whizzing through the air. As it

reached the correct dimensions it became a real toad, still wearing a fluffy pink cardigan and landed on the lap of one Dolores Jane Umbridge. Harry casually left the arena to thunderous applause mixed in with deep belly laughs, he noticed Joan and Ginny leaving their seats and Millicent with Ron following them.

The judges were forced to give him full marks though the next contestant, Barnabas Bole wasn't so fortunate. His Chinese Fireball just stared at the Hogwarts champion and he wet himself before fainting in a crumpled heap, he had to be levitated out the arena and out the competition. It was kind of fitting that Dumbledore's champion didn't even manage to fire off a spell before ending up lying unconscious in a puddle of his own piss.

As they were preparing Hermione's dragon Harry was suddenly very worried, if Joan had been heading down to meet him she should have been here by now. He left to search for his daughter but what he found made his blood turn to ice, someone was going to die for this.

A/N thanks for reading and especially to those of you who take the time to review, I really do appreciate it.

Chapter 30

Bella's nerves were stretched tighter than a dragon's heartstring, she had been hiding below the stadium for two days now, laying low as the aurors guarded the entrances and contestant tent without once searching the arena before the event.

She'd watched the whole by-play with the half giant, couldn't these people at least have some respectable friends? As they trooped off into their seats Bella took up station between the stands that was also an auror blind spot and tried to remain calm, she had no potions left and was beginning to feel the effects of them leaving her body but steeled herself with the knowledge that it would all be over soon. One way or the other her life would change forever in the next few hours, she was in position and it was now down to fate whether she was going to be given an opportunity to participate in events or just hide here until everyone went home then try to get out the country.

Bella didn't know if she should be cheering or cursing as the four walked right into her ambush zone, she was pretty sure that the tall girl was the one who hit her in the graveyard but that was more to do with recognising the cowardly weasel by her side. She didn't recognise the other little red head but Potter's adopted daughter was just too good a target to pass up, fate had made her decision and now Bella only had seconds to act.

She burst from concealment and fired off two cutting curses at the girls before summoning three wands, grabbing the child as she spoke to the small redhead who was on the ground before kicking her in the stomach.

"Tell Potter to destroy the cup or he'll get his daughter back in tiny pieces."

The curse had hit Ginny square on the chest but her life had been saved by the dragon hide vest that Harry had bought her though the force had knocked the petite witch onto her back. Her wand was gone but Remus had been training her for just such a scenario, the knife in her wrist holder slipped into her waiting hand. Ginny's vest also absorbed most of the impact from Bella's kick to her stomach but

Ginny jack-knifed as if in great pain and used this movement to plunge her blade deep into the bitch's thigh.

"Get your filthy hands off her you bastard!" Ginny screamed at the death eater but Lestrangle toppled backwards and pulled Joan down with her before she must have activated a portkey as they both disappeared.

Ginny was on her knees wailing "NO!" as Harry came upon the scene, he rushed to Ginny who was covered in blood and it took her a second to answer him. "It's not mine or Joan's, I managed to stab that bitch Lestrangle but she got away with Joan. I'm so sorry Harry, I let you down."

Any thoughts on continuing that conversation were ended when they glanced over at the other couple.

Millie had seen the curse heading straight for her but had been frozen in place, suddenly she was moving and something heavy landed on top of her, something heavy and wet.

She looked to see her betrothed who must have pushed her out the path of the curse but this had placed him directly in the line of fire, he was cut from shoulder to hip and bleeding profusely.

Millie cradled Ron's head in her arms and looked pleadingly towards Harry.

One glance told Harry Ron didn't have long to live though Millicent's words seemed to pull him out his stupor, "He gave his life to save mine."

Harry's temper was barely under control, "Not today he didn't, Dobby!"

The little elf appeared and immediately took charge, he started emptying his many pockets and resizing objects, soon there was a hospital bed, instruments and a table with potions of every kind on it. He handed a blood-replenishing potion to Millicent, "Make him drink this and when he's finished we'll give him more."

Harry asked his little friend where he got all the stuff; it was with a wry smile that Dobby answered him. "When Harry Potter is your friend it's best to be prepared for anything, Winky will be bringing Poppy in a moment."

Harry and Hermione had been in constant communication and the witch just couldn't wait any longer, she burst out the tent and into the arena as the dragon handlers were getting ready to leave.

A brilliant bolt of red light blasted from each of her outstretched hands and both hit the dragon between its eyes; the massive creature was knocked out instantly as Hermione raced for the golden egg. She threw it towards Charlie before casting a sonorus on herself, "Team two, let's go now. Poppy you're needed..." Winky was here already popping the healer to the scene, "Amelia that bitch Lestrage has just kidnapped Joan, do not let the competition stop as that's exactly what the bastards want, we'll deal with it!"

Anyone in the large audience who thought that this fifteen-year-old muggle born witch shouldn't be giving orders to the minister of magic kept their mouths shut for two very good reasons. The first being that she had just single-handedly knocked out a dragon in under two seconds and the second reason was the look on her face when she said 'we'll deal with it,' this had scared the life out of everyone and they all silently thanked Merlin that they weren't the ones going to be dealt with.

Sirius was hurrying out the stadium and cursing himself for stupidly letting Joan go without a bigger escort, they could see Harry and there were aurors everywhere so they thought she'd be safe having such a short walk. He could see Moony berating himself about the same thing, his friend had fought most of his life to contain his inner wolf but one thing that always brought it to the surface was anyone harming a child. The fact that he was going to become a father and already considered Joan part of his family made it ten times worse, his cousin would not survive to see tomorrow it was only the manner and, noticing that Dan and Emma both had their weapons already in their hands, a question of who would carry out the deed.

Back in the stadium Pomona had to take the phone off her sobbing niece and hand it to Justin Finch-Fletchley as the people in Italy would be every bit as anxious for news as they were, she pulled Amber into a hug. "This is why they're fighting, so our children can grow up without this threat. They'll come back to us and we'll have to be strong for them, hurting a child is probably the worst crime anyone could commit and they won't be taking prisoners."

-oOoOo-

At the Potter Institute it was pandemonium as everyone had heard Hermione's instructions to Amelia. While Filius and Minerva tried to restore order, Percy was assisting Jillian with the younger children and only the fact that they couldn't hear what was happening at Hogwarts got the noise level reduced. Justin's voice coming out the speaker that was hooked up to the phone had a lot to do with this, his plummy tone was similar to a BBC WWII radio correspondent which was probably quite apt as whoever had taken Joan had just declared war on the Potters, not a good idea.

The three former Gryffindor chasers were comforting a distraught Natalie Macdonald with Minerva and Filius watching as the older students helped comfort the younger ones and especially the children from the orphanage. It was little Joanne who changed the whole mood with her heartfelt comment, "That bad witch doesn't know who she's messing with, Harry and Hermione will be really pissed and kick her arse into next week."

Jillian Green scooped the little girl into her arms and, instead of a lecture about her use of language the girl received a hug and a kiss, "Joanne's right, Joan will likely be home for dinner so lets sit quietly so we can hear what's happening."

Alice Longbottom was sitting holding Augusta's hand, silently praying that fate wouldn't bring her back only to take the most precious thing in the world away from her as payment. Alice was aware on some level that her thoughts were irrational but she was a mother whose family were going into battle so conflicting thoughts and emotions were par for the course.

There was no way on this earth that Harry and Hermione wouldn't go after their adopted daughter just as there was not a hope in hell of Neville and Luna not being right by their side when they did. Both had stayed by her last night as they had talked for hours about everything and nothing, just trying to get to know each other and lay the foundation for their future relationship. When Neville and Luna had left because of needing sleep for today, Augusta and Alice had chatted long into the night as the mother was brought up to speed on her son's life.

Augusta's eyes had almost glowed with the pride she felt for her grandson but there was also a hint of sadness in her voice that Alice was quick to pick up on and immediately set about dispelling.

"Mum, we're always going to need you in our lives. The way Neville and Luna look at each other it's not going to be long before we've got a wedding to plan and that's very hard for me to take, I couldn't be happier with the girl he's chosen but the last memories I have of him he was still in nappies. We need to get tomorrow over with then hopefully Frank back before making any plans about where we go from here, never doubt for a second that you are a big part of those plans. You were left in a terrible situation yet have done a wonderful job of raising Neville, I couldn't be prouder off my son and know I couldn't stop him today even if I wanted to. He's his fathers son and I'm just praying he gets to meet him."

Justin's voice informed them that Hermione had also been given full marks and they were trying to get an unconscious dragon out the arena and prepare for the fourth contestant, Fleur Delacour.

Some of the older students were now beginning to understand why Harry didn't want them to attend today, they were realising just how dangerous this could turn out to be if Voldemort actually made an appearance.

-oOoOo-

Winky delivered Poppy to the impromptu medical facility and her first thoughts were of a bloody Ginny.

“Mum, I’m uninjured, this blood belongs to the death eater that I stabbed in the thigh. It’s Ron who needs your help.”

Dobby had him placed on the bed and all the potions lined up like soldiers on parade, Millicent was finishing off administering his second dose of blood-replenishing potion. Poppy handed the girl a third vial as she began trying to treat the massive wound while Winky conjured up walls and a roof, turning the area into a small field hospital that Dobby had equipped.

Hermione raced in just ahead of the other team and met a tearful Ginny who tried to apologise for not protecting Joan, it was Remus who was more growling than talking that answered. “Ginny there were eight of us in Black Manor and we couldn’t bring her down, it’s not your fault as we should never have let you go unaccompanied.”

Everyone there agreed with that assessment but Poppy added her two Knuts worth as she worked feverishly on Ron, “Judging by the amount of blood on Ginny she must have at least nicked the Femoral artery, if Lestrage doesn’t get medical help soon she’ll pass out and eventually die from blood loss, if she pulls out that knife she won’t last two minutes.”

The Potters made their decision, “Ok we need team two to remain here in case Riddle shows his snout, we’ll go after the mad bitch and communicate via mobile phones.”

There were four very unhappy people now in the field hospital, five if you counted Ginny but they had a command structure in place for a reason and now wasn’t the time to argue the toss.

Harry and Hermione took Neville and Luna away by side apparition just before Shackbolt turned up enquiring if there was anything they could do to help.

-oOoOo-

Bella landed heavily which hurt her leg even worse but at least she held on to the girl, in an increasingly rare moment of clarity she wondered if her parents would be proud of her. Long term resident of

Azkaban, lost an arm, no teeth, currently had a knife sticking out her leg and all so she could take this little girl to meet a perverted squirrel.

She had to use a gravestone to help get herself onto her feet, managing with great difficulty to cast a tourniquet above her wound while still keeping a hold on the brat. The death eater got quite a shock when she looked into the eyes of the child who wasn't the slightest bit afraid of Bella or her current situation.

"You have no idea what you've just done," an indignant Joan declared to a bemused Bella. "you're in so much trouble because my family are so gonna kick your arse all over this graveyard."

Bella was beginning to think she'd lost more blood than she first thought, who did this little bitch think she was? "Listen kid, your chances of still being alive at suppertime tonight are not great so don't give me any of your lip. You don't have a family, you're adopted!"

Joan actually rolled her eyes at the bad witches stupidity, "That just makes my family all the more special, mum and dad actually picked me to be their daughter, your parents didn't get a choice."

"Look you brat, you're the one in trouble here and nobody knows where you are."

"My mum says that I'll always be safe as long as my dad's around and he's standing right behind you."

"Nice try kid but I stopped falling for that old trick before I hit my teens, now get your arse moving before I take my wand to you."

A female voice behind Bella snarled, "Touch my daughter and I'll rip your throat out."

-oOoOo-

The four found themselves in the middle of the Grangers living room as Hermione offered an explanation, "We're going to try and send the

four of us back an hour in time, we can't interfere with that bitch taking Joan because we know it already happened but we can be in the graveyard waiting on the portkey delivering them there."

Luna proved why she had been sorted into Ravenclaw, "ok I've got some questions, will it work with four of us? Are you sure she'll go to the graveyard and why didn't we wait to see if Riddle showed up first and then go back in time?"

Hermione was holding onto Harry for strength as he answered their sister's questions, "The time turner took two of us back three hours so we think it will manage four for one hour, Riddle will be hiding out at the old mansion and won't allow portkeys or apparition into the building so it's the graveyard and walk. As to why we didn't wait if we know something's happened we can't change it, if the bastards did something to Joan and sent us proof we couldn't reverse it."

Luna and Neville went deathly pale, if they decided to cut a body part off Joan then post it to Harry they wouldn't be able to prevent the incident as they knew it had already happened.

"We came here because we knew the house was empty as we spent the morning in London, this way it should eliminate the chance of meeting your 'other' self which would be very bad." Like Harry, if Hermione told Neville something would be very bad then that was good enough for him.

She pulled out a gold chain with a small egg timer on it and they had all to stand close so that the chain encompassed all four of them. One turn of the egg timer charm and they blinked out of existence, reappearing in the exact same spot but an hour earlier.

Checking the time and estimating when the portkey activated, Harry disillusioned everyone before they side apparated to the graveyard.

They found it empty and reckoned they had between thirty and thirty five minutes to wait for the portkey to arrive, it was a fair sized graveyard but they decided to stake out the Riddle grave for no other reason than that's where the original portkey deposited Harry and

Cedric. Even from this position though they could still see the entrance to the old house as they waited on Joan to arrive.

When both eventually did turn up it was clear Ginny had done a number on the death eater, she was still losing blood and hardly able to stand though still managing to hold Joan close to her.

Their hearts filled with love for the little witch at her declaration of family and Harry was sure she could feel their presence as she didn't squeal as he lifted the charm and they became visible once more.

When Hermione made her threat Bellatrix spun round and rapidly fired four killing curses at them, only three were blocked before Harry's hand shot out and intercepted the green beam that was just about to hit Luna.

Bellatrix may not exactly have been at her fighting best but fear had lent her speed and power, the death eater put everything she had left into her four Avada Kedavra's. Seeing three of them blocked was shocking enough but when Potter caught the last one like a snitch, Bella's potion deprived mind struggled to comprehend what her eyes were telling her. The traumatised witch dropped her wand in shock as a puddle started to form at her feet, only the fact that she was still leaning on a gravestone kept her upright.

The death eater spinning round and casting curses allowed Joan to get out of the way allowing Neville his opportunity, they'd watched a sci-fi movie where someone was frozen solid and hung on a wall as an ornament. Neville wanted a similar fate for this bitch and planned on using her as a climbing frame in his greenhouse for Venomous Tentacula, having firstly worked on an appropriate petrifying spell with Hermione. It took a lot of power to perform the spell though and Neville wasn't sure he'd be able to cast it until he saw the killing curse almost claim his betrothed; he let the death eater have it with everything that he had.

The spell worked by instantly and totally freezing living tissue but there was one side effect they hadn't considered, as Neville's spell left Bellatrix frozen like a statue Joan approached her.

“I told you my family would come for me!” Joan then kicked her uncle Neville’s new garden ornament angrily on the ankle, which caused Bellatrix Lestrange to shatter into thousands of tiny frozen pieces with not one being bigger than a gobstone.

Joan didn’t get time to contemplate this as she was whisked off her feet and into her crying mother’s arms, her aunt Luna quickly joining the hug.

Harry was standing with his arm on Neville’s shoulders, “How do you feel Nev?”

He took a calming breath before answering, “I’m fine Harry, after getting my mum back yesterday a lot of the hatred had gone. I used to think that it was cruel being able to see them but they weren’t there, talking to mum last night healed a lot of that. What I did today was for taking Joan and trying to kill Luna, my family honour has been satisfied.”

The bundle of energy that was Joan Potter hit them both, almost hugging the life out them. “Uncle Neville, could you tell aunt Ginny it was you who broke her knife?”

Neville just smiled, “for you sweetie, anything.”

“Can we use the phone yet to find out how Ron is?” asked Luna.

Harry felt Joan stiffen in his arms, “Bellatrix fired a bad spell at your aunt Millicent but Ron pushed her out the way and it hit him, Poppy was working on him when we left.”

“I think we’re still too early as we haven’t left yet, what are we going to do about Riddle?” Hermione asked.

Harry thought for a moment before replying, “I think we stay here unless we get a phone call, he’s currently up in that house and we hope he stays there until he dies.”

-oOoOo-

Emma reckoned that Fleur had completed her task by the cheering emanating from the stadium, she didn't know how she was going to get through the waiting when her mobile phone went off; the voice on the other end had her in tears of relief.

“Hi gran, I'm fine and so is everyone else. The bad witch is gone and won't be bothering us ever again.”

She had to hand the phone to her husband with only Emma's smile letting the rest of the worried party know things were fine as she was choked with emotion and incapable of speech. She sat and cried for her family that were safe for the moment before being joined by Ginny; Millicent had never left Ron's side. She heard her husband pass on a report that Poppy was still working on Ron and was becoming more hopeful the longer he kept breathing.

Emma pulled herself together and after hugs from a much relieved Sirius, Remus and her husband the four started to prepare for battle, if it was going to happen it would be soon and she'd sworn to be ready any time her family needed her.

-oOoOo-

Victor was not pleased with his marks, what do a few smashed dragon eggs matter to him? His mood became even darker when the minister stood and made an announcement that had the whole stadium cheering like mad for something that wasn't Victor Krum.

“” Lord Potter has just informed me that his daughter is safe and Bellatrix Lestrage is no longer with us.”

Amelia continued to talk to Harry until the unnatural silence made the minister lift her head, what she saw was transmitted down the phone as “Oh Fuck!”

-oOoOo-

In the Potter institute their phone clearly picked up Amelia's message resulting in jubilation on a never before seen scale, McGonagall was on a table dancing with Flitwick while the younger kids started chanting, "Potter! Potter! Potter!" This was soon taken up by everyone and only stopped when Justin's clearly panicked voice started blasting out the speaker, "Oh Shit! Oh Shit! Oh Shit!"

-oOoOo-

The squirrel was hopping around the room, unable to settle. It was days since he'd last seen Bella and he could actually feel his magic being pulled towards a certain location. He had deliberated with himself over the best course of action to take and was unsure that appearing in public under this guise wouldn't do permanent damage to his image when he returned with a new body. When the pull on his magic became painful his opinion rapidly changed, he was Lord Voldemort – the most powerful wizard in the world, people would bow to his power no matter what form his body took. He let the pull on his magic guide him to the required destination and apparated out of Riddle Manor.

The tent flaps opened and a six-foot squirrel bounced into the arena, totally silencing the crowd. It stood proudly facing the main stand and with the sun at its back looked majestic with its bushy tail and ears standing straight up, it really was a stunning sight. The whole illusion was ruptured very quickly though, a bit like David Beckham when the creature spoke.

"I am Lord Voldemort, master of death and the most powerful wizard in the world, you will all bow down before me!"

As soon as two red headed twins heard that squeak coming from the squirrel they both loudly burst out laughing, throwing out comments in their own inimitable style.

"Bow to Bushy Tail?"

"He's out of his tree!"

“Definitely Nuts!”

“Looks quite cute though.”

“If you’re into Squirrels.”

“Nothing wrong with a red head.”

“The furry red arse is a bit off-putting though!”

The crowd were starting to laugh as the twins berating of the ridiculous rodent emphasised just how ludicrous the creature’s demands were.

The squirrel squealed and fired a curse at the twins, knocking them both flying through the air. Shackbolt and about a dozen of his aurors started firing curses but the squirrel was casually batting them away before starting to reply with some of his own.

Voldemort was rapidly firing curses everywhere and actually beginning to enjoy himself, showing these fools his real power. All that quickly changed with the sound of gunfire being immediately accompanied by pain, he spun round only to be knocked on his tail as Peter’s wand went flying from his paw.

Harry and Hermione were holding hands and letting their true power show, actually scaring the shit out of the Squirrel. “Just before we end this Tommy, or should that be Tufty? We have a few presents for you, Dobby!”

Hufflepuff’s cup, Slytherin’s locket, Ravenclaw’s diadem, Marvolo’s ring and his own diary rained down on the squirrel’s head.

There all gone,” said Harry but still not mentioning horcruxes so only a select few knew what he was talking about. “The good witches and wizards of Britain have rid this country of your followers, granting them their wish to eat death. Now it’s your turn to pay for your crimes Tommy boy, I would imagine there’s quite a number of angry people waiting for you on the other side.”

The sound of the squirrel crying and begging for mercy in its squeaky voice destroyed the legend of Voldemort forever, no one would ever again be afraid to say the coward's name. The Potters were ready to administer the final blow when they were halted by an almighty crunch that could be clearly heard in the Potter Institute.

The Hungarian Horntail had sat quietly and amazingly unnoticed, protecting its eggs and ready to attack anything that came too close. As she hadn't been fed since being dragged from her home some days ago the smell of blood and fear surrounding the bushy tailed one proved too tempting, one quick pounce and she was biting through the squirrel's head and wondering where she could get more of these strangely delicious morsels, goats and sheep just wouldn't taste the same after this.

It was like a car crash, bloody and horrific but not one person present was able to take their eyes off the spectacle that was playing out before them, a Hungarian Horntail had just munched down a squirrel snack for lunch. Harry had entered Tom Marvolo Riddle into the tournament by his hand and the dark lord was most definitely dead as the dragon spat out a bushy tail before retreating back to its nest.

Harry stepped forward and bowed to the noble beast before incinerating the tail, he wanted nothing to remain of Voldemort. He took his wife by the hand and led his family out of there to the sound of total silence, a creature had just died a horrible death and cheering just didn't feel appropriate.

As the whole stadium watched Pomona and Amber led the Institute students to the exit, each one with their head held high and their school logo clearly visible. They had put their faith in Harry when all others doubted and that doubt would take more swallowing than a squirrel down a dragon's throat.

Joan's little legs were just a blur as she raced towards her parents, waiting with her aunt Ginny in the field hospital was agony and at first glimpse of them returning there was no stopping the young witch. Clinging to her parents the hug was then joined by all the fighting group and Ginny, Pomona and Amber came running with any thoughts of dignity or decorum vanishing as soon as they spotted

their wizards. The Institute students joined their friends and professors in a mass hug of relief before Hagrid bounded up and attempted to join in, unfortunately his enthusiasm combined with his rather large size knocked them all over like skittles. Thankfully the only thing broken was the mood as they all started laughing while helping each other regain their footing.

“Sorry bout that!” Hagrid apologised “I was just so glad to see you all OK, always knew you would be a great wizard Harry but Hermione, Neville and Luna, you were brilliant and so brave.”

“Thanks Hagrid,” Neville blushed.

“I’m leaving Hogwarts at Christmas, Charlie has got me a job working with the dragons in Romania. It’s always been my dream and the pay is a lot more to, there’s nothing left for me at Hogwarts now.”

“Anytime you need anything Hagrid you let me know, you were my first friend and gave me my very first birthday gift that I love dearly. You’ll always find a welcome at our house and we’ll be back to see you before Christmas.”

Amelia approached the group, “Lord Potter, as minister of magic I would like to express the gratitude of the witches and wizards of Britain for ridding our country of the cancer that was Voldemort. As Amelia Bones I would just like to say that you all were magnificent today, Shack and his aurors couldn’t cope with him and you eight turning up saved a number of lives today. We have some injuries but thanks to the armour your gold provided are confident Riddle is going to be the only fatality, even the Weasley twins survived with no more than broken bones.”

“Ron Weasley got hit when he pushed Millicent away from a cutting curse that Bellatrix fired, Poppy’s working on him now.” With impeccable timing the healer walked over just as Hermione was finishing informing the minister.

“He’s going to be ok, sore for a few days and will be weak for a while after that, I’d like to take them both back with us.”

“I think it’s time we were all going home,” Remus was standing with his arm around his pregnant wife knowing the last obstacle to his dreams had been removed. Home with a wife and family made him the richest man in the world.

-oOoOo-

Her mum was putting Joan to bed when the little girl’s nose began twitching; Hermione hugged her daughter to her and asked what was troubling her.

“I heard some people talking and they were saying Britain was now safe with the bad witch and wizard gone, does that mean we’ll be leaving here?” asked the clearly worried girl.

Like Harry, Hermione wouldn’t lie to her daughter or fob the little girl off with some excuses. “We have no plans to return to live in Britain, things might change in the future but if they do we’ll sit down as a family and discuss our options. If you can look back six months and think of the changes in our lives then you’ll understand why I’m not ruling anything out but I’m pretty sure Italy will be our home for many years to come.”

This seemed to settle some of her fears but Hermione could sense there was something else bothering Joan, “Mum I was frightened today, not when the bad witch had me because I knew you’d come for me. When you left me with aunt Ginny and everyone walked away I wasn’t sure if I would see you again, I was really scared mum.” The sight of her daughter’s tears broke Hermione’s heart.

“I just kept repeating what you told me, no harm could come to you while dad was there and it’s true mum.”

She held her daughter tight, “we’ll never leave you again sweetie, that should be the last of them and we can live our lives in peace now.” She kissed Joan before tucking her in, Millicent was going to be staying with her ‘niece’ tonight after she finished saying goodnight to Ron in the infirmary.

-oOoOo-

Amelia looked at the pieces of parchment that might grant her freedom sooner than she thought, both Drumstrang and Beauxbatons realised their contestants were massively outclassed by the Potters so with one contestant dead and another disqualified they were proposing the competition be cancelled. As they had already competed in the first task there was no danger of anyone losing their magic if the ministry declared it over.

She was certain Harry and Hermione would jump at the chance since they had already achieved their objective and it was going to save Amelia trying to choose who would be their hostages that were going to end up awaiting rescue at the bottom of the lake.

The headlines in tomorrow's papers would be spectacular and Amelia could throw fuel on the fire by citing bigotry and bias as her reason for quitting as the minister of magic on Monday. She truly wondered if the British magical community could survive and was certain it wouldn't without changes, that would be the job of the new minister and they were welcome to it.

Amelia could honestly swear she'd done the best job she could and with Harry's very public display of displeasure at toad woman, Deloris was effectively out the running to replace her. She was sure there must be a hell of a story there somewhere and perhaps one day the Potters would tell her the tale.

-oOoOo-

Neville lay cuddling his blond betrothed, it had been quite the few days and tomorrow Harry and Hermione were going to attempt to awaken his father. Neville Longbottom's life changed beyond all recognition the day Harry Potter said he wanted him at his side, all three Lestranges were dead, his mother was back and he was positive they would help his father return too. When you factored in that the beautiful witch currently in his arms was going to marry him then Neville knew his lonely days were well and truly over.

Luna felt Neville's arms tighten around her and smiled, they were so close now she could almost read his mind. Her heart was filled with happiness for him and the fact that their friends could begin to lead normal lives. The blond witch could now concentrate on her studies because passing her NEWT's granted her the ultimate reward, becoming Mrs Luna Longbottom.

-oOoOo-

Amber was staring again at the ring on her finger, put there by the wizard who was currently sleeping beside her after their earlier exertions. The emotions currently racing through her body left her more likely to be dancing rather than snoozing, she was sure that she must be glowing in the dark with happiness.

They hadn't even thought about using potions or spells and neither was worried, a Christmas wedding was their future and if she became pregnant by then so much the better. Another Lupin boy would be best friends with a Black once more, if she and her aunt Pomona had any say in the matter there would be a whole tribe of Blacks and Lupins pulling pranks at the Potter Institute.

That thought had her snuggling back into her wizard, with some encouragement he just might wake up and discover what was waiting for him.

-oOoOo-

Dan Granger held his weeping wife, their bracelets told him this was exactly what she needed. The pressure had been steadily building towards today and now that it was over and they were all safe Emma needed to let it all out, her tears were those of relief as she hadn't expected them all to emerge unscathed from their ordeal.

Their lives had been a rollercoaster ride ever since that day in the bank, they would never want to return to their old lives but their emotions had been rubbed raw with all the peaks and troughs. They now had a daughter, son and a granddaughter but needed some level and steady track to catch their breath and enjoy their new family.

With the danger to their family now gone both Grangers were looking forward to what their children would do next, they were certain it wouldn't be boring but just hoped it didn't include armour and bullets.

-oOoOo-

Hermione was getting ready to join her husband in bed when she had a thought, "Do you think we could invite the Macdonalds to spend at least some of Christmas with us, Natalie and Joan seem quite close."

Harry chuckled, "Hardly surprising love as Natalie reminds me quite a bit of a certain Miss Granger in her first year, at least she doesn't have two clueless first year boys to corrupt her into telling lies to Minerva. I think that would be a great idea and will phone Roy tomorrow and we can maybe surprise both girls."

Hermione climbed in beside her husband, "Thanks for today Harry, when that bitch took our Joan I would have lost it without you in my head keeping me from going insane. I'm glad Joan kicked the bitch as every time I looked at that statue I would want to rip its head off and spit down the bitch's neck. Only the fact that I knew Neville had a prior claim on her stopped me from killing the bastard as painfully as I could."

Harry kissed his wife's anger away before she cuddled into him, "Do you think it will be easier to get Neville's dad back?" she asked.

Hermione could physically feel the heat radiating off Harry with embarrassment, a raised eyebrow was enough to let her husband know it was time to spill the beans.

"My beloved godmother whispered a phrase she assures me will get Frank out of there like a shot." Harry's hope that his wife wouldn't require him to repeat the phrase was so slim that it really was no hope at all.

"Apparently they were going to try for another child so she told me to tell Frank that 'mother needs her snuggle bunny for a midnight picnic so they can make a brother or sister for little Neville."

Hermione was doing her trout after flies impression before giving herself a mental shake, "Are you taking the piss?"

"I wish I was, we may need to obliviate each other when I come back."

After such a harrowing day it was something of a relief to hear the sound of laughter reverberating around the Potter Institute for Sorcery and Spells.

THE END

A/N thanks for reading this story and especially those who took the time to review.

*Tufty was a red squirrel that was used for many years in a massively successful road safety campaign and even has his own web site now; only the British could have a squirrel teaching our children how to cross the road – you really couldn't make that up.